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# FLYFISHING

August/September 2015  
Vol. 28 No. 150

**MAGAZINE**

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## from the editor



**Sheena Carnie**

IT'S almost spring which should herald the start of warmer weather, but there will still be plenty of days when it's just too windy or miserable to be out on the water, so this issue is packed with reading material to keep you informed, entertained and inspired until you can get back out there fishing.

We've got articles covering everything from dogtooth tuna caught from the shore (page 13) and large trout caught on bass flies in Lesotho (page 23) to the beloved brown trout of KZN and bass landed on small flies (page 50). If you're busy planning your end of year holiday and you'll be traveling along the N1, Dean Impson gives you a couple of ideas of

places you might like to stop over — especially if you have your fly-rod close at hand.

In the second in our series *Women in Waders*, we run Peter Brigg's interview with Pamela Simpson (page 28) who has taken to flyfishing like a duck to water. We're also very proud to introduce our readers to another new columnist, Andrew Savs, who has a different, irreverent perspective on most things. Read his first contribution to our magazine on page 10 and see if you agree with him.

With so many diverse articles there's sure to be something for everyone.

Happy reading.

*Sheena Carnie*

## in my opinion



**Erwin Bursik**

LAZILY drifting around on my float-tube, surrounded by a vista of lakes, rolling hills and mountains, I often ponder whether flyfishing is a sport, an activity or a pastime. Perhaps I'm quibbling over semantics, but it does make a difference to how some people perceive our "game". In this age of competitiveness most of those in the game and those who observe from the sidelines consider it to be a sport. However, many flyfishers would rather consider it to be more of an obsession. A limited number among us consider it to be a highly competitive sport. This group of flyfishers is affiliated to the South African Sport Anglers and Casting Confederation (SASAC) which falls under the South African Sports Confederation

and Olympic Committee (SACOC) and the Department of Sport.

The vast majority of us, following in the footsteps of our predecessors, just cast a fly for the sheer pleasure of the activity. Enjoying the surroundings and the presence of the fish we target is all we desire from the "sport".

I recently read Paul Curtis's book *Fishing Wider Margins* and was reminded of the significance of the early pioneers who started to introduce exotic fish species, largely from Europe, to South Africa between 1890 and the early 1900s. In Paul's book he details how this was undertaken by early settlers to South Africa and the extraordinary efforts that were made to find the correct way of breeding and stocking not only trout, but also bass and carp into our inland waterways. It was nothing like the simple task of the fish breeders of today who, with a phone call, can stock any waters on demand.

As early as 1867 the Cape Colonial Parliament passed a bill "... for encouraging the introduction into the waters of this Colony fishes not native to such waters".

The continued path of trial and error makes for extremely interesting reading. His Excellency, the Governor, Hercules Robinson and then Prime Minister Cecil John Rhodes in 1895 reported to both Houses of Parliament that the first 13 000 "Colonial Trout" had been raised and 5 000 had been released into local waters.

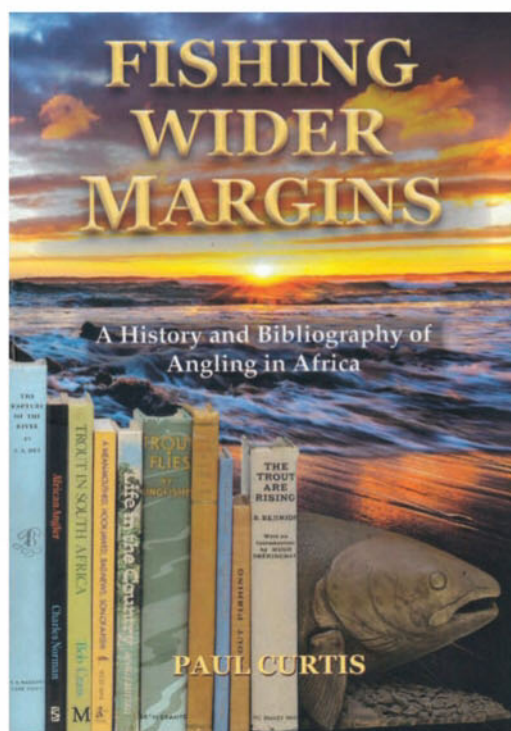
In 1889 the Natal Legislative Council managed to get the government to agree to support the first trout hatchery in Natal near Currie's Post with 500 "Colonial Trout". John Parker, a farmer and avid trout angler, instigated this effort after his immigration to the colonies from Yorkshire in England. (See Peter Brigg's article on this in the April 2003 issue of FLYFISHING magazine.)

It is from the writings of old that these gems of information filter through to those of us who largely take for granted the incredible flyfishing to which we have access. Paul Curtis is to be commended for his work on the book which revives an appreciation of what these great men of yore did for flyfishing today.

How surprised they would be if they could see how well their trout have flourished — and the challenges they face nowadays.

*Erwin Bursik*





## WIDENING THE NET

**Fishing Wider Margins by Paul Curtis**  
Book reviewed by Erwin Bursik

**F**LICKING through Paul Curtis's latest book when it arrived on my desk, I felt a tad confused. The ongoing listing of South African angling books and publications created serious questions in my mind as to just what Paul was attempting to convey to readers.

However, when I sat down and quietly started to read *Fishing Wider Margins* I became totally captivated. I was impressed not only by Paul's synopsis of the many books and magazines he has researched and written about in this 500 page volume, but also with the incredible amount of time he has spent delving deep into the history of the many publications he has covered.

Paul says, "It gives the details and history of 259 books written on African fish and fishing since Victorian times — most of which are in my own library. I've been doing research for the last five years and it's taken over a year to write." A labour of love indeed.

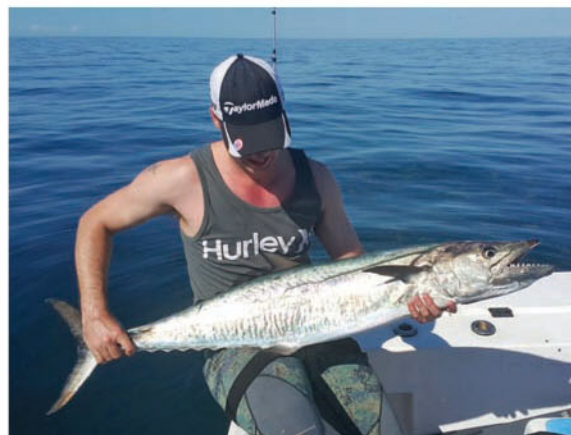
Starting with purely flyfishing publications, Paul's depth of research kept me glued to the pages and taught me a huge amount by filling in many details on the history of our incredible pastime.

Paul's book will find resonance among those of us who value old books and magazines because *Fishing Wider Margins* lists many of them and Paul's précis of each creates a fervent desire among enthusiasts to search for these

This issue's winner of a Snowbee XS fly-line  
**PLUS** a pair of Snowbee ultra lightweight wraparound polarised sunglasses



**T**HE winner of the fourth of six Snowbee prize packs up for grabs in the present series — a Snowbee XS fly-line of the winner's choice, plus a pair of Snowbee ultra-lightweight black wrap-around polarised sunglasses, model S18084 — courtesy of The Kingfisher, Hunter Street, Durban, for fly-caught saltwater fish is Brett van Rensburg who caught this king mackerel (aka 'cuda) off Moçambique.



Brett takes up the story: "I recently had the pleasure of going on a boys' trip to Rio Azul in Moçambique. The resort is beautifully situated on an estuary and is any fisherman's dream. On the day in question I was standing in the front of the boat with my trusty 10-wt in hand.

"We were getting many chases on spinner bait but the large streamer pattern I was running was not attracting much attention. Just as I began to think it was time for a change I got an all mighty hit and run. The speed of the take made me think it was a 'cuda and I wasn't wrong. The fish was strong and had me bent over the boat for the better part of half an hour until I landed my personal best on fly — a 13kg 'cuda. It was delicious cooked over the fire that night."

Congratulations, Brett. Please contact The Kingfisher on (031) 368-3903, or via e-mail at <kingfish@iafrica.co.za>, to arrange collection or delivery of your prize.

There are another two Snowbee prize packs to be won in the next two issues of *FLYFISHING*. If you'd like to enter your saltwater fish, caught in Southern African waters, send us a ±100 word story with details of your catch — how, where, rod, reel, line-weight and fly — plus photograph and personal details (name, address and phone number), and you could win the prize pack on offer. Email entries to <angler@mags.co.za> with the subject: The Kingfisher Snowbee Competition.

**Snowbee**



books in order to devour the complete package of information they contain.

*Fishing Wider Margins* is a book that every collector must have, but even those who aren't collectors will value the concise history of South African angling which it offers.

*Fishing Wider Margins* is published and distributed by Platanna Press and is stocked in selected angling- and bookshops. For further details or to order a copy directly from the publishers email <orders@platannapress.co.za>.

**SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND?**

Write to:

The editor

**FLYFISHING** magazine

<sheena@mags.co.za>



**T**HIS issue's winner of the members' draw is Andrew Cooper (right), membership no AC0007, of Parkhurst, Johannesburg. His prize is Airflo flyline kindly donated by Gareth Adams of Stealth Fly Fishing.

Resulting from an original idea back in 1982, Airflo is now the industry's leading manufacturer of speciality fly-lines. Innovation is the key at Airflo. Developments such as RIDGE Technology, density compensation, low stretch power core and unrivalled welded loops are all Airflo innovations and really set their fly-lines apart. Airflo manufacture the world's only range of "100% PVC free" fly lines.



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## NEW NORTHVAAL CHAIRPERSON

By Peter Arderne

**A**T a recent FOSAF Northvaal Chapter AGM Chris Williams was elected as the new chairperson taking over from Peter Mills who stepped down earlier in the year. Chris (pictured, right) was born in England and, as a youngster, fished for many of the UK's freshwater species. His family later moved to South Africa where he attended St Stithians College in Randburg. After graduating at the University of Witwatersrand he went to Australia for seven years where he fished in both freshwater and saltwater.

On returning to South Africa he became chairman of his old school's very successful Stithians Fly Fishers Club which is now open to the public in addition to the scholars.



The club organises monthly outings to either trout destinations or yellowfish venues on the Vaal and its tributaries. It also does a considerable amount of education and conservation work.

Chris also appears from time to time on Classic FM flyfishing shows.

Chris is married to Bernadette and they have two children who are also graduates of Wits. Chris and his wife live in Johannesburg where he runs a shipping business and is also the ambassador for the Citadel Conservation Trust. Some of their time is spent on the family's property near Badplaas in Mpumalanga where the Seekoeispruit, a tributary of the Komati, offers good light tackle fishing for small and largescale yellowfish.



Remember to keep up to date with FOSAF news, fishing conditions and other relevant information by regularly checking the website <www.fosaf.co.za>

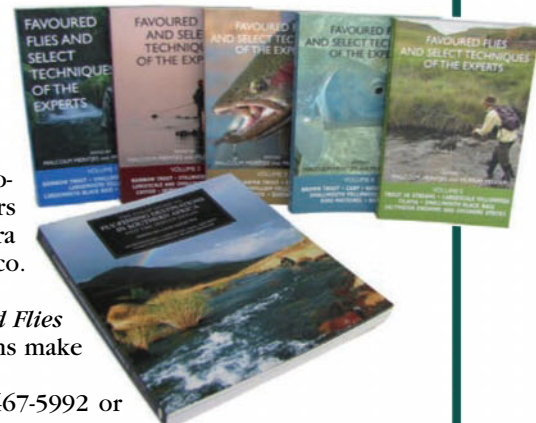


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## A fresh take on tackle

**I**SHUDDER to my core when I see what some anglers spend on fly-fishing tackle. I'm not even sure that "tackle" is the right word — "equipment" sounds a little better but still doesn't do this sort of kit the justice that it deserves. It's like calling a Van Gogh a "picture", the eLotheni a "river", Charlize Theron a "chick" and so forth.

I'm a simple man of modest means; I know not the feel of a truly fine rod or reel in my rough, artisan-like hands. Most of what I take to the stream I've made myself or I've re-purposed from something else. The remainder of my kit has come my way from the bags, boxes and garages of friends by means of a neatly tailor-made long-term lending scheme. (That these friends are not always aware of the existence of the scheme or even who has borrowed their kit is a matter between me and my conscience and your mother cautioned you not to be judgmental.)

I recently bought a nice new rod. Most flyfishers I know say this at least once a year but I, in glaring contrast,

have been fishing the same stick for almost ten years now. I need to tell you though, this new rod is quite something.

It's fast, light and delicate but can lift a long line neatly from the meniscus and drop a fly delicately onto a predetermined speck of water somewhere in the middle distance. It is fast and sweet and true. It is fast and is made of materials and to tolerances that were previously reserved for the manufacture of deep space telescopes. It is fast and it is fantastic. It is a monumental convergence of art and technology and it represents the pinnacle of the triumph of human endeavours.

This new rod of mine is well made; ridiculously well made. It is made to a standard that would make the most anal-retentive master craftsman blush in shame. There is not a wrap of thread or a micron of varnish that is not exactly, microscopically the same as the ones around it. I often lie awake in bed at night ashamed at the number of Spanish cork oaks that had to perish in order to get enough perfect material to

make that one grip, and for my part in their wasteful demise.

This is a great rod. A fast, delicate masterpiece of a rod.

And I hate it.

Every cast is an anxious nightmare and I genuinely live in fear of it.

How fast is it exactly? This demonic pole is so fast that I've felt the hook penetrate the flesh of the nape of my neck on the return cast before I've fully completed snapping my eyelids shut to avoid the fly being embedded in them on my initial back cast. What the hell do you need a rod that fast for? This thing is as rigid as a 16-year-old on a nudist beach.

Delicate? I don't really do delicate. I'm the guy sticking his spurs into the ribs of the bull in the china shop. As for the need for distance casting, I haven't made a cast longer than ten metres in several seasons. (In fairness, this has more to do with compensating for my failing eyesight and my recent propensity to be looking two or three metres away from where my quarry has neatly spat out my dry than it has



to do with any tactical advantage that I might gain from it.)

I like my old stick. That thing is as forgiving as a favourite grandparent. It's just a good, honest working man's fly-rod. It reacts to my overhead ministrations at an unhurried pace as it and I slowly amble up brisk mountain streams, picking her pockets as we go.

I feel compelled to describe what makes this old piece of unpedigreed graphite so special, but it isn't easy to put into words. I think that what separates her from my newer satanic pole is that she's got a "feel"; a lightness of touch that is hard to explain.

"Feel" and "lightness of touch" are important qualities in both a rod and an angler. I have a mate (who sadly I lost contact with after he travelled overseas, went out for a drink and was never heard of again) who possessed a singular lack of feel or deftness of touch. His hands were like granite and his senses were dull. He came to visit me one vacation while I was living in Dwesa Nature Reserve on the Wild Coast.

[While the episode that I relate does not involve the casting of a fly-line, the general principles of angling are, as I'm sure you agree, universal.]

This buddy of mine modelled himself as something of an outdoorsman and looked more than a little upset when I handed him on his arrival a rod and asked him whether he could cast a Penn 49.

His first cast landed on the rocks at his feet with a sound not unlike what I would imagine a lollipop being swiftly removed from a frog's arse would sound like. (A sort of tight sucking sound followed by a loud slapping noise.) Nonchalantly wiping the smear of atomised sardine fillet from his spectacles he took some time to compose himself.

I stood paralysed in silent laughter and bit back the temptation to offer

him an Afro comb to undo what was an overwind the likes of which were last seen when the Gordian knot was tied.

Cast two followed cast one in general trajectory but managed to slip over the ledge and into the rip below.

I watched his bait slide slowly underwater perhaps a yard off the ledge and, as he seemed inclined to just leave it there, I said nothing. A short while later I noticed that his bait had been dragged a little further offshore. I then observed that it was being dragged parallel to the shore, offshore and back in again.

"Strike."

"Huh?"

"STRIKE!"

This is  
a great rod.  
A fast, delicate  
masterpiece  
of a rod.  
And I hate it.

As he raised his rod tip sheer, unadulterated hell and anarchy broke loose in a symphony of swearing and screaming reels and shouting and instructions and swearing. There is nothing that a 5kg kob likes less than being furiously wound up a jagged, barnacled rock face (other than being furiously wound up a jagged, barnacled rock face without the opportunity to at least put up a good account of itself).

Our hysterical cries of "The gaff! The gaff!" fell on deaf ears as the fish,

brain in turmoil trying to work out what the hell was going on, made its tethered way up the ledge, over various sharp edges capable of severing a shad trace and, a bit later, onto my dinner plate displayed nicely next to a lemon wedge.

I may be labouring the point and I suppose it goes to show that feel isn't the most important quality for an angler provided that he also has a more than ordinary amount of luck, but it's something that I look for in a light fly-rod.

Like me, my faithful old stick is not too delicate. She has handled almost a decade of her reel seat being used as a bottle opener without showing much more than a scratch. Screw titanium, it's good old fashioned cast iron that you're after. (It's a neat trick, this opening of beer bottles with your reel seat; pop by anytime with a case of imports and I'll teach you.)

It is a peculiarity of a bygone era that we bond with our tools and possessions; that we would favour them above those which are newer and "better" and more handsome. We forgive them their minor inadequacies and compensate for their poor sense of fashion and frustrating old world eccentricities.

That old rod presented the fly onto the Little Mooi that landed me my first wild brown. She is the only witness to a 22-inch fish on a piece of the Mooi that you wouldn't believe holds anything bigger than 12 inches of stippled beauty. She is a part of my soul and an extension of myself.

I once read that you don't have a soul, you are a soul. What you have is a body. I think I get that.

• Andrew Savs writes an entertaining blog named *Another Word for It*. Visit <https://anotherwordforit.wordpress.com/> and check it out. You can also join the conversation with Andrew and others on Facebook at Trout Talk.



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A clearly elated Nicola Vitali and angler Jeff Tyser show off the dogtooth tuna caught from shore.



# HEEL!

## Catching a doggie from shore

**T**HE Red Sea has been a red-hot topic amongst saltwater flyfishers ever since Tourette Fishing started hosting guided trips to Sudan in 2013. The dispute about the photographs of trophy yellow margin triggerfish, titan triggerfish, twinspot snapper and giant trevally that littered the internet due to numerous exploratory trips to this destination was not because of the inferiority complex it sparked amongst those who regularly visit the Seychelles. Instead, it was in the press and widely discussed as it

appeared to be an exceptional African tropical saltwater destination that had the potential to be a big attraction.

The Tourette guides spread stories of 35kg giant trevally, 8-9kg bonefish, 6kg permit and 6kg titan triggerfish that had been hooked by clients, but none of the anglers could stop the Ferrari-fast runs of these fish from reaching sharp coral. Most of these big fish were lost with little backing left on the spools. However, it was only when I spoke to Rob Scott before my trip to the Nubian Flats north of Port Sudan in June that he

told me about the dogtooth tuna they had seen close to land and my ears really pricked up.

Dogtooth tuna are scientifically described as an offshore fish species that may come close to coral reefs and atolls, but it is generally found in deep water. Their appearance in shallow coastal water is uncommon and catching a doggie from the side could probably be compared to the mythical dream of flyfishermen catching yellowfin tuna from Rooikrans at Cape Point. In other words, it is possible, but highly unlikely.





Leonard with a yellowmargin triggerfish. The insets show details of its tail and eye.

The Tourette Fishing team had seen one or two of these fish chase a teaser (a lure with no hooks attached to it) from very deep water to the edges of coral reefs in the Red Sea where clients waited with 12-wt rods to get a shot at the pelagic predators that would come swooping in close enough to reach with a fly-line. Similarly, I had the privilege of having large predatory fish chase a teaser to my feet and even caught a beaut of a twinspot snapper that way, but never saw a dogtooth come after the lure.

Jeff Tyser, the angler who accompanied me under the guidance of Nicola Vitali, fished blind in between the teasing spots. Jeff didn't hook a large predatory fish coming after the teaser; he pulled off something that was a lot more impressive and challenging — he caught a dogtooth tuna on a blind cast from a knee deep reef that was the shoreline of Magarsum Island. This is Jeff's story:

With the wind gusting at well over 30 knots, spotting fish was becoming increasingly difficult, so we made the call to tease along the drop-offs. It was

slow going at first, and although Nicola worked the big, hookless plug like his life depended on it, not even the garfish were showing any interest.

Then, without warning, things started happening. First a big GT came out of nowhere and annihilated the teaser as it approached the reef, but the fish failed to find our flies. A few minutes later we almost stepped on an even bigger GT which was holding in a shallow depression on the reef. It must have been a little spooked because it completely ignored Leonard's perfectly placed fly before it drifted over the edge and out of sight.

A little later there was a bit of a bust-up about 40 metres out. We couldn't quite tell if the foot-long fish coming out of the water were doing the hunting or were being hunted, but either way we were in no doubt that there were fish around, and the 12-wt began to feel a little lighter in my hand.

I began making short blind casts into the abyss as we moved between teasing points. On one of these casts a big bluefin followed the black #6/0 brush fly right to my feet, so I decided to put a few more casts into the area while Leonard and Nicola continued down the reef.

Two throws later, BANG! Something slammed the fly so hard, it practically dragged me to my knees. The fish sounded immediately and I stumbled to the edge, trying to keep the line clear of the coral and maintain some kind of

control. Could it be a giant trevally or a big bluefin trevally, I wondered.

Whatever it was, it was fast, strong and intent on getting to the bottom of the ocean. Despite its power, it wasn't gigantic like a goliath grouper and I was able to pull hard enough on the 1.2mm leader to keep the fish on the fly-line.

Nicola had noticed the commotion and rushed to join me where I was balancing on the edge of sharp coral and a drop off that plummeted over 30 metres deep. At first he offered words of encouragement, but those were replaced by crazy screams when, a few minutes later, he was able to get a number plate. "Doggie! Doggie! It's a f\*%^\$# dogtooth tuna!"

A short while later I eased the fish up onto the coral flat where Nicola was able to tail it. High fives, a few photos and plenty of Italian swear words followed. Strangers only four days earlier, the three of us felt united by that fish. We all knew it was probably a once-in-a-lifetime moment, and we took our time savouring it.

• For more details about this trip visit <http://feathersandfluoro.com/?p=11224>.

• Interestingly, soon after Jeff's incredible catch Keith Rose-Innes caught dogtooth tuna on fly from the reef drop-offs surrounding Astove Atoll in the Seychelles. Perhaps it's a case of practice makes perfect.






Leonard Flemming with a lovely twinspot snapper that followed a teaser aggressively from deep water onto a shallow reef platform.



## Getting to know the brown trout in the streams of KZN



**W**HILE brown trout are considerably less common than rainbows, here in KZN we are fortunate to have several watersheds in which they hold sway. These are watersheds into which rainbows have escaped or even been stocked over the years, but where somehow the browns have won through and continue to flourish.

It is a little uncanny that all the brown trout streams of KZN, barring one, have their source on the same spine of high ground — the spine which runs out from the tip of the escarpment at Giants Castle. All of the rivers and streams I will mention here have been written about extensively over the years, both in this magazine and elsewhere, but here I am considering these watersheds in a region defined by its browns.

If you glance at a map of the area, you will see an eastward bulge in the Lesotho border. That border, of course, follows the watershed of the Drakensberg, and at a point sort of midway up the Berg in KZN, as your eye travels northward up the map, you will find that bulge where the run of the escarpment changes direction and recedes westward for the northern berg. From the tip of the Giant, and with a little imagination, you can follow a reasonably narrow band of high ground, that persists as far eastward as Greytown. This spine separates the drier bioclimatic regions of northern KZN, from the misty and more rugged southern half. North of it, you will find thorn trees within sight of the Berg, and south of it you will not. The rainfall is higher to the south; the soils are different in the north. And balanced between these contrasts, in mountain streams and slower meandering rivers, you find the browns.

The rivers in which you find them rise on the back of the Giant (the Nzinga and the Lotheni) or on the front (the Mooi and the Bushmans), or they rise off some extension or outcrop of this high ground (the Elands, the Umgeni and the streams of the Karkloof). The only exception is the Mkomazi to the south. I have yet to hear a plausible explanation, or in fact any explanation, as to why the browns and not the rainbows have made this region of transition between north and south their home. Suffice it to say that they have been here for well over a century, and they continue to delight the fly

angler for whom a Brown (with a capital “B”) holds a special place.

When we catch and photograph them, we hover lovingly over descriptions of their colouration and patterns. It is said that the ones from the Mkomazi have leopard-like spots that extend up over the top of their heads, and that they have spots on their tails. The ones from the Umgeni have sparse spots, but generally have a few of the “Von Bher” reds thrown in too. The Bushmans’ browns are butter yellow, but are less likely to have red spots, and those of the Mooi vary more than all the rest.

These browns are fickle fish. They can be infuriating in their ability to sulk on holidays and weekends, and amusing in their foolishness at throwing themselves at the fly on some days. They have a tendency to occupy the most bizarre and unlikely spots on the river, and in so doing to surprise the unsuspecting angler.

There are few of us who do not have a story of spooking or catching a brown in some unlikely spot. Just this season I hooked and landed a beauty on the middle Bushmans that caught me by surprise. I was fishing up a gravel bar, concentrating on the fast, deep run to my left where repeated drifts of my nymph went unanswered. As an afterthought, and on reaching the head of the pool, I flicked a fly into the stagnant and shallow water off to my right, drifting it back close to the bank where there was a little shade. It was an act of casting practice at best.

After three satisfying casts in which I proved to myself that I could still get a fly in close, I turned to my friend Roy who was taking a break on the bank opposite me. He was motioning wildly to a spot behind me and when I turned back I saw that the fish had taken the dragging fly in the stagnant water. It tore off down a white water rapid, stripping line from the reel, and all I could do to protect the fine tippet

**Opposite from top to bottom, brown trout from the lower Bushmans, Umgeni and Mooi rivers.**

**Above: Fishing the tranquil waters of the Ncibidwana.**





# Stippled BEAUTIES





was to climb onto the bank and run after it. I eventually landed it in the pool below. "Brown trout don't fight," you will hear them say!

Then, this season Roy and I were back on the Bushmans, but on a lower stretch where the big river runs deep and green and the promise of five pound trout hangs heavily in one's consciousness. There we spent a late afternoon casting #20 dries to browns of three to six inches. No better.

Not three months earlier, fishing the Mooi so high up that it splits into two unnamed branches, I ran my fly through the white bubbles of the prettiest of plunge pools and was surprised by a veritable monster for such a small beck: a fish of 15 inches. In March Graeme and I were up on the Mkomazi and after I had left him at a pool that he had already fished for 15 minutes without result, I heard him hollering and saw his rod bent. After congratulating him on the fish and setting out again, he called me back to witness him landing another — and then another and another. Four good fish out of the same pool, and a well trodden path from that pool to the one above!

On that day he got just one other fish: a small one whose tail had appeared fleetingly in the water beside my leg and which took a dry fly dangled under the tip of his rod, held back at his waist so as not to overshoot the mark.

In recent years I was starting to despair at the apparent scarcity of fish in the Umgeni, but then at the end of the season a couple of us were rewarded for our tenacity with a bundle of browns from that river. They were the very prettiest of fish, positively glowing in the yellow hues of the autumn landscape in which we found them.

Last season one angler remarked on his catch return from an upper beat of the Umgeni: "Overgrown and difficult. Thorns, trees, nettles. Just the way I like it!" He proceeded to

record four browns between ten and 18 inches in length.

On another occasion I was remarking to someone how the Mooi simply doesn't hold huge browns — or certainly no more than makes them a rarity. He then told me that his son had just caught a fish of over three pounds on the fishing club stretch! Then there was the day that two of us fished the Lotheni at the tail end of the reserve and the fish couldn't resist the biggest, ugliest, glow-in-the-dark legs, hopper in my box while they spurned the beautifully presented nymphs and dries of my partner.

You have probably all seen articles and pictures of these rivers at various times; you may even have fished a few, but I wonder how many dedicated followers there are. Do you want to immerse yourself in the river browns of KZN? Would you like to sneak around under the trees dropping flies into unlikely holes, expecting the unexpected? Or would you like to stride out on a clear mountain stream and flick hoppers into the holes and pockets in fast runs for butter yellow browns?

Unfortunately the Central Berg and KZN Midlands lack a hub. What do I mean? Well we all know Rhodes and we all know Underberg. Both places have a central location where you can call in and get info or book waters. You can call in at Dave Walker's in Rhodes or the Himeville Arms and ask some questions and you will be put onto some water. However, the area I have described is widespread and varied; it is transected by a major freeway. It has a few country towns scattered around, but no major hub like the other two I have mentioned.

I suppose Nottingham Road is about as close as you can get, and Jan Korrubel is at the flyshop in Nottingham Road to give anglers a hand. Jan is great like that — he is always up for a chat and to share his knowledge. There is also that bastion of civilization The Notties Pub! But from the headwaters of the Bushmans to the cascading Mkomzi and in-between is a



Graeme Steart fishing the crystal clear waters of the Mkomazi.



Roy Ward fishing the Bushmans under the watchful eye of the giant.



sprawling and varied area. The waters are by no means inaccessible, but you probably can't roll in from Joburg and be on some river water before breakfast the next morning.

If you would like to fish your way across the region and tick off the rivers as you go, your best bet is to mix four solutions:

Make good use of the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife reserves. You can get excellent brown trout fishing at Giants Castle (Bushmans), Kamberg (Mooi), Lotheni (Lotheni) and Vergelegen (Mkomazi). Each one is a fair drive out from Nottingham Road, but certainly Kamberg and Giants are doable for a day trip from Notties. You will need to set out early, though, with lunch packed. Vergelegen, as the name suggests, and Lotheni are reached via a long, rough drive, but if I can do a day trip there from Hilton, you can do it from your lodgings in Nottingham Road. Just be prepared for a long day.

Rivers sometimes run dirty and you don't want to be trapped without a second option. Wildfly offers some superb stillwaters, and you should call into their shop in Nottingham Road to arrange a membership to keep on standby. You won't be sorry. Visit <[www.wildfly.co.za](http://www.wildfly.co.za)> for more details.

The Natal Fly Fishers Club has some excellent river stretches on the Mooi and the Umgeni. Their annual subs are such that you could join and use their waters "every now and then" and still be getting a good deal.

Visit their website for more details <[www.nffc.co.za](http://www.nffc.co.za)>.

The fourth option is the tribal areas where many of us

have fished for years without any problem at all. At the entrance to Vergelegen, Lotheni, Kamberg and Giants Castle the communities are simply remarkable in their hospitality. If you park on the roadside, and there are people around, ask some of the youngsters if they will guard your car. Spend time talking to them and tip them generously before you leave to fish and even more generously when you return. These people do not see the river as belonging to them as a commercial farmer might do; they will be surprisingly welcoming and willing to share in their resource.

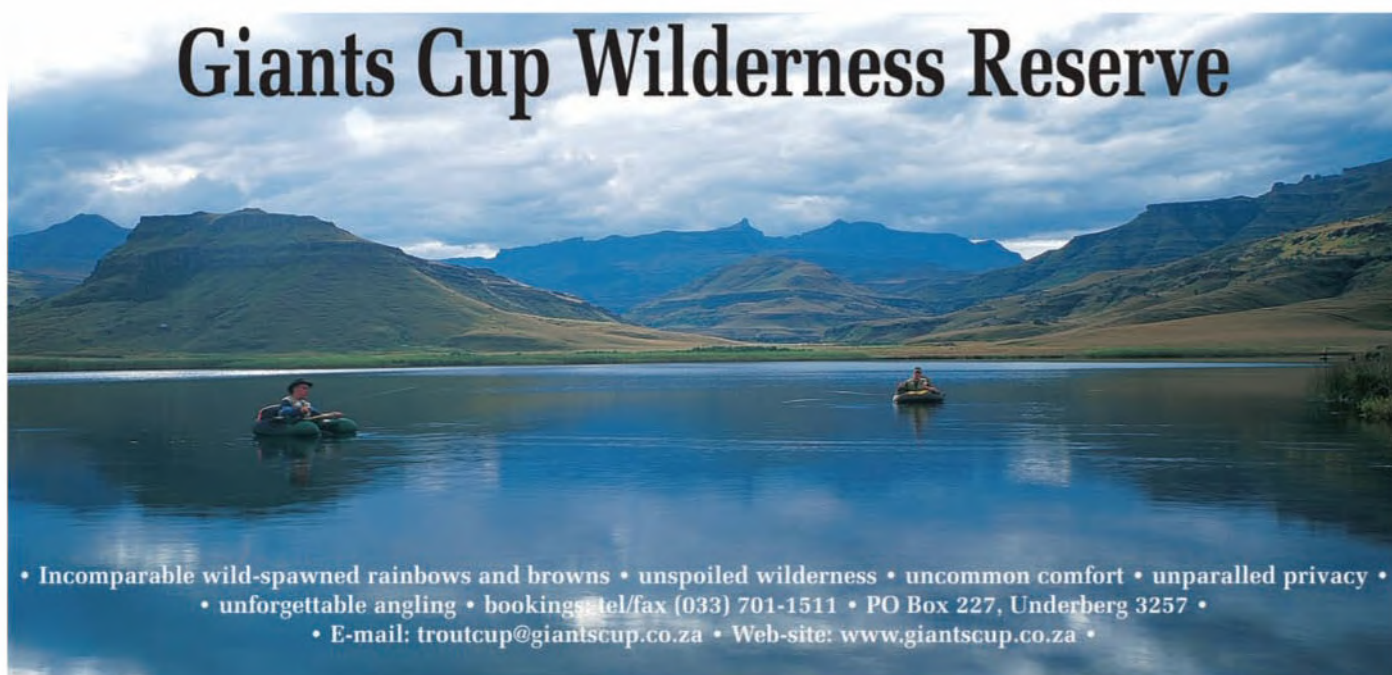
For a guided visit to the Mooi or Bushmans you can contact Richard Khumalo of the Tendela Project on 073 287 2947 or email <[thendela@flyfishing@gmail.com](mailto:thendela@flyfishing@gmail.com)>.

Your best way to share in the brown trout magic of KZN's streams is to visit regularly and immerse yourself in the place. It takes years to truly get to know the rivers and the characters who know them, but if you approach it as something you want to be part of, venues and opportunities will open up.

In general we have very few fishermen who pay attention to, or have a love for the rivers of this region. While one always hesitates to give away the secret fishing spots, many appreciate that if you want something to survive, endure and flourish, it needs a following. The Brown trout rivers of KZN need such a following; they need a following of energetic and enthusiastic types who are happy to get out there and hike and get wet and dirty and fall in love with the stippled beauties that inhabit these waters.



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# *Fishing maketh* A FULL MAN

... and so do our journeys

I'M not normally the type to tell a story, but I recently ventured out on an unexpected journey which demands a story. By default, and at short notice, I received a call from a mate, Pieter, inviting me to join him on a trip to Lesotho to go and target some yellowfish in the streams. Two days before departure the five-day trip was

confirmed! Talk about short notice. Fortunately my wife, SWAMBO (she who always must be obeyed) understands that I would have sulked for a month if I didn't go. So, the deal was done and I soon found myself on the way to Lesotho, passport in hand.

I had borrowed a vehicle from Trevor Babich because I reckoned my

old Tata called Nommer Sewe (named after the donkey in the old Jopie Adam TV series) ironically wouldn't make the journey in the land of donkeys and Basotho ponies — something about steep hills and sharp turns.

Along the way we made a quick stop in Bethlehem for a few supplies where I was casually informed that my five-day



The author with a beautiful Lesotho rainbow.  
Photo courtesy of Tourette Fishing.





**The beautiful Katse Dam (top) and the 5-star accommodation where the flyfishers encountered a couple of klipspringer kids.**

trip was actually a seven-day trip! Picture the scene: Just minutes before we reached the border post where we'd no longer have signal I had to explain to SWAMBO why I would be away from home that tiny little bit longer and that our booked and paid for trip for the weekend would have to be cancelled. I am sure many of you can relate...

The border just outside Clarens was an absolute doddle — the quickest border crossing I had ever done legally to go fishing. The roads were absolutely fantastic and I wasn't sure why we needed to spend so many hours planning the trip when our camp was so close to Katse Dam. I soon discovered the reason.

We travelled through a small, busy town and made the turn on to what must be the steepest, windiest, most beautiful pass in the world. The road only allowed for speeds of not much more than 40km an hour in the big

Nissan Patrol I was driving. There were many times when I wasn't sure if the road would go over the cliff to oblivion or just make a screeching hard right turn. These roads are not for the faint-hearted nor for the height sensitive. If you're a control freak you definitely would not want to be a passenger on these roads!

We travelled past one of the most amazing dams and if any of you are the type to take a sho't left or right I would strongly suggest you go and check out the dam — it's surreal; in fact the whole trip was surreal. Although it's only a short distance from Johannesburg, it took us 11 hours to reach our destination — a collection of thatched stone huts with mud floors and big ventilation gaps between the thatched roof and the walls.

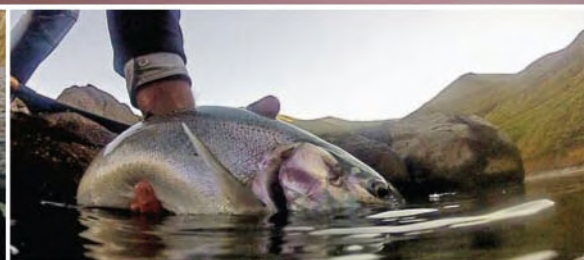
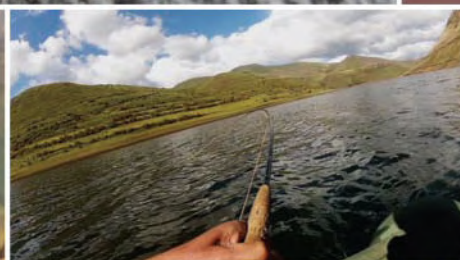
Memorable journeys are made of things that are sometimes completely different to those with which we are

comfortable. Life was good — we had good beds, good food, (sometimes) hot showers and, from our stone castle, we had the view of a thousand lifetimes. The river meandered almost completely around the elevated camp in an oxbow-like fashion, surrounding us with more than "a few of our favourite things".

The weather had ensured the fishing wasn't up to its normal splendour and we had to work for the yellows in the river, as would anyone seeking gold, but the rewards were beyond belief. The yellows out of the river are that same splendid gold that you would expect from Sterkfontein Dam and on the right day this venue has the ability to deliver an easy 50 fish of gold to an angler presenting a dry fly.

Because of the short notice and my hasty preparation, I really didn't even have flies that could do justice to this type of fishing. These yellows eat big, gaudy terrestrials that I would be scared





**Flies borrowed from friends (top) plus a couple of bass flies helped the author land a beautiful 6½ lb trout and a lovely yellow.**

to cast at a bass.

Most mornings I managed to slip away down to where the last rapid opens up into a long channel leading into the dam. I was aware that there were trout in that part of the dam, but I wasn't prepared for the fact that the babies were 4 lb fish! With all the wrong flies, I had to make do with one of my bass patterns (see tying instructions overleaf for the Bastard), but still managed to muster fish up to 8½ lb. That is a huge fish for moving water, comparable to the best venues in the world. I obviously made hay while the sun shone and while my compatriots targeted yellows, I targeted trout.

I also managed to borrow a float-tube and a few dry flies and paddled into the dam itself, throwing my flies at the cliffs and banks. The closer I got to the edge, the more fish I caught. The only way I can describe this is to say I wacked the fish — what a day of fun.

The fishing is such that I could spend a day waxing lyrical about it, but you need to see it for yourself to properly appreciate it.

The other things that will never leave me about this trip are the way a donkey can run like crazy and that those Lesotho klipspringer kids ride them like there's no tomorrow in terrain where you and I would feel wobbly standing. The paths they travel on are sometimes so steep you actually feel like crawling on the ground to navigate them and yet these people plough and grow food on these mountainous cliffs.

We have all seen the advertisement where one gentleman shouts "Hello!" across the valley and is answered by another one far away. Well, it's true — every afternoon you hear the mountain telegraph being spoken this way. In some cases you even hear people harmonising in song from opposite sides of the valley.

There is no way to fully describe these experiences and living them is unreal. From the boys with their bottle cap traditional clothes doing their rites of passage to manhood, to the haunting calls of the jackal buzzards there just are no words. You might even catch a fly or two as you gaze in amazement at these sights.

I have to go there again, and maybe you'd like to join me on a hosted trip. Think about this: Francis Bacon said "reading maketh a full man"; I say fishing maketh a full man because without it we would be only words. We are much richer for the experiences of life that fishing offers us.

• For more information email the author on <[tbflyfish2008@gmail.com](mailto:tbflyfish2008@gmail.com)> or contact him via Facebook — Terence James Babich. Maybe on the next trip you can help him look for words to describe the experience..



# THE BASSTARD

## A bass fly that catches (big) trout



The finished Basstard.

The Basstard when wet.

By Terry Babich

**T**HIS fly caught me trout up to 8½ lb in Lesotho this year. It has a lot of movement and acts as a bit of a baitfish pattern. Fish often take it on the sink, so always be ready for a strike. It isn't the prettiest fly, but once it is wet it has a lot of movement. Just be careful the tail doesn't twist around the bend of the hook as this will affect the number of fish you catch. The Basstard can be weighted if you want. I tie it in a variety of colours.

### STEP BY STEP...

Use a 4mm black tungsten bead on a stinger hook of choice. Dress the hook with 140UTC cotton — the type that can be split for spinning materials into the thread.

Tie in a nice fluffy section of black marabou just behind the bead and trap it down securely.

Strip a small section of material off a piece of olive suede chenille, leaving only the inner thread. Trap the thread at the

base of the tail and wrap forward, creating a body around which the wet marabou can form. This will help to make the marabou pulsate and move when you're retrieving the fly and also helps form that tapered shape that imitates baitfish and nymphs. Leave enough space to spin the marabou body — about a third of the hook shank.

Using something sharp, split the thread evenly, creating two threads. Now take a section of loose marabou and trap the fibres along the length of the quill into a bulldog clip and trim off. Place the ends between the two threads and release from the clip. Now spin the bobbin and release the cotton. This will spin the threads, trapping the fibres firmly between them.

Take the spun marabou and wind it onto the shank of the hook in close turns, palmering the feathers back with each rotation of thread. You may have to repeat this process until you finish up just behind the bead. Where you can, tie off. Use a touch of head cement and you're done.





# BIG FISH COMPETITION



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JP Bartholomew with his 7.8kg blacktip kingfish.

## THIS ISSUE'S WINNER

JP Bartholomew is this issue's winner with his 7.8kg blacktip kingfish caught off Reef Bay, Umdloti.

JP cast his red and black brush fly on a heavy 40 lb fluoro leader into the bay amongst the scattered rocks and allowed it to sink before starting to retrieve the line. On his second pull the line went tight and before he knew it he was into his backing, trying to slow down the fish and turn it around quickly before it had a chance to cut him off. Judging by the constant headshakes JP was certain it was a kingie. He kept the pressure on and used the shorebreak to help bring in the fish. After a good fight a nice size wave finally brought the kingie close to the beach — a beautiful 81cm, 7.8kg blacktip kingfish.

Congratulations, JP. Please contact Xplorer Flyfishing on (031) 564-7368, or e-mail <jandi@netactive.co.za> to arrange collection or delivery of your prize.

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FRESHWATER: Minimum weight - 2.5kg (5 lb 10 oz) or minimum length 55cm

SALTWATER: Minimum weight - 5kg (11 lb) or minimum length 70cm

\* "Length" means the fork length - a measurement from fork of tail to tip of lower jaw.

Entries should include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address, plus a photograph of the fish, its size either in kilograms or pounds, or its length in centimetres, where and when the fish was caught, as well as details of the rod, reel, line-weight and fly.

The fish must have been caught within 12 months of the submission date.

Send your entries to: XPLORER BIG FISH

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Alternatively, entries can be e-mailed to [angler@mags.co.za](mailto:angler@mags.co.za).

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**XPLORER**  
FLY FISHING



**T**HE first I heard of Pamela Simpson (no relation to that dysfunctional family on television, she assures me) was when I read one of her articles in this magazine a couple of editions ago. I realised immediately that this was someone who had a grasp of the depth of what this wonderful sport, pastime or whatever you would like to call it, has to offer. It also excited me just to see her writing in a generally male dominated flyfishing arena. It really is time that this changed and that more of our ladies donned waders — irrespective of how unflattering they can be at times — and participated. I believe they have much to offer and it would also make a change to the beauty of the scenery.

Pamela is married and lives in Cape Town with her husband, Bruce. She says they are in the midst of, “baking a baby” which is due in August. She is also a freelance writer and piano teacher, having broken away from a more corporate career as a brand manager four years ago to follow her dreams.

Most importantly, for this forum, she loves flyfishing, so I set out to discover more about her and how she became involved with flyfishing.

**PB: Who/what got you started in fly-fishing and how long have you been fishing now?**

PS: My husband, Bruce, taught me to fish when we first started dating in 2008. It's been his favourite pastime

since he was a child and I wanted to experience this thing he was so passionate about. We joke that it was a prerequisite to a marriage proposal. Coincidentally he asked me to be his wife on a fishing weekend, when I was in my waders — not exactly the outfit I would have chosen as a day-dreaming teen, but the reality was infinitely more wonderful and it makes for a great story to tell the kids.

**PB: Were there any others, locally or from overseas, that influenced your fly-fishing and if so in what way?**

PS: It really was all about my husband. Had it not been for him, I would never have even considered giving it a try — it just didn't cross my radar. Now I am

## Part 2: Getting to know Pamela Simpson

# WOMEN IN WADERS





so glad he encouraged it because the second I felt a tug on my line, I was instantly in love.

Locally all the flyfishing shop owners and managers in the Cape Town area played quite a big part in building me up as a flyfisher because they were all so accommodating of my requests of “But does it come in pink?” They tied special flies for me, helped me find products online to be shipped in and I had a few great guiding sessions on the water with Philip Meyer right at the beginning.

I suppose if I had to choose one person overseas that had any influence it would be Joan Wulff, although I never met her. Her video on casting techniques is very helpful and I admire her for having done all she did. I have even had dreams about her scolding me for not trying to improve my technique enough. Sorry, Mrs Wulff, I will be better — I promise!

**PB: Do you have a preference for a particular form of flyfishing?**

PS: I love freshwater flyfishing and catching salmonids, but do not have a preference for river wading or float-tubing on the dams — each comes with its own set of obstacles and delights. I tried spey-casting in Scotland which was fun, and I enjoy roll-casting when the surroundings call for it — although

I’m still not good at it.

**PB: Where are your home waters? Do you fish these the most and have you fished elsewhere locally and overseas?**

PS: I live in Cape Town so we go fishing in the surrounding areas a lot. We usually fish the CPS rivers a few times over the summer season, then we fish the local estuaries and go away for one weekend a month in the winter season to our favourite local stillwater spots up in the mountains. I have also been on fishing trips to Dullstroom, Gourits, Scotland and England.

**PB: What is your favourite fishing spot?**

PS: It’s hard to choose — Holsloot is beautiful, but Lakenvlei is a current favourite.

**PB: Do you have any particular memories that stand out in your flyfishing journey?**

PS: Going on a one month trip with my husband to the UK for mayfly season was an amazing experience. We got to fish from the famous chalk streams down in Winchester all the way up to the glorious Tay in the Scottish Highlands.

A highlight was definitely seeing the salmon jumping upstream when we went to see the “salmon ladder” in Pitlochry, and meeting a gilly named Effing Johnny — apparently he earned

his nickname because of his bad language, but his accent was so thick I barely knew what he was saying.

Winchester had a fabulous stream which featured little wendy houses set up where you could take shelter and have a cup of hot tea to warm frozen fingers.

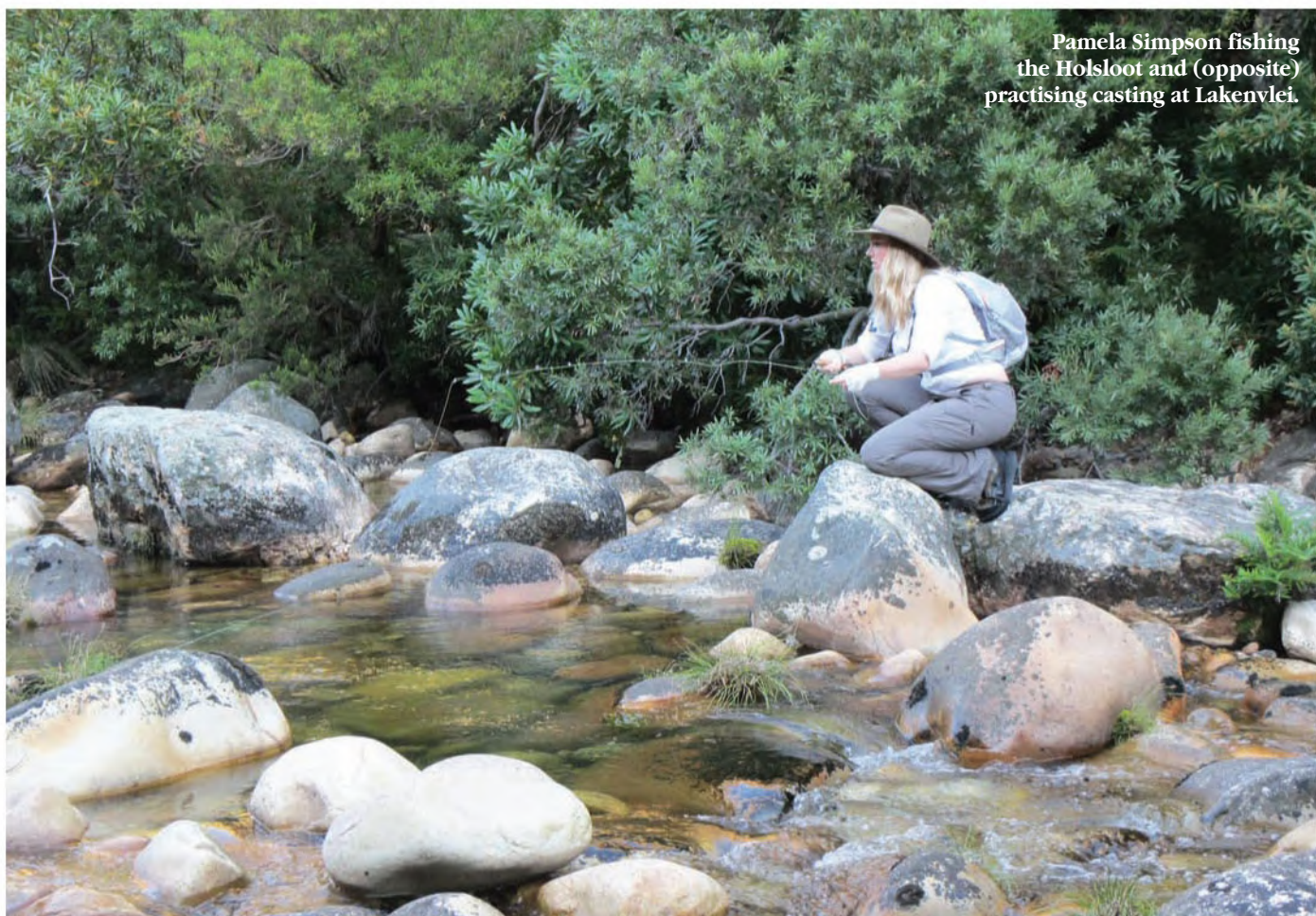
I loved catching beautiful grayling for the first time — such elegant, ethereal fish — and now have a reel painted with the fish pattern and a drawing of a grayling framed at home. It was quite something fishing alongside wild swans with pheasants flying overhead to the noise of hunters guns going off like popcorn popping.

**PB: Have you any flyfishing venues on your bucket list or plans in the pipeline to visit new fishing grounds locally or abroad?**

PS: Who doesn’t? If I had my way, I would do one extravagant trip with my husband a year. I would fish South Island in New Zealand, many parts of America, Canada, Slovenia and go back to the UK to fish the Avon River in Bath.

The more I learn about flyfishing the more I find places that I would love to go and see.

I would really love to fish somewhere where the water is the colour of a skyblue vodka bottle, clear as ice and with snow falling all around me.



Pamela Simpson fishing the Holsloot and (opposite) practising casting at Lakenvlei.





**Pretty in pink.** Pamela Simpson with her first grayling and (above) her special gift — a pink Sage 5-wt rod called The Grace and limited edition grayling-inspired reel.

**PB: On average how many times a month/year do you fish?**

PS: We try to go about one weekend a month, but throw in a longer fishing trip of more epic proportions every couple of years.

**PB: What are your favourite rods, reels and lines?**

PS: I was thoroughly spoiled and for my birthday I was given a pink Sage 5-wt called The Grace. It was a limited edition rod produced by Sage for cancer awareness. Combined with my Abel grayling reel, it's a killer combo that picks up fish like there's no tomorrow!

I am currently having a 2-wt Sage TXL blank custom-built for me in baby pink — watch out little river fish!

These are my favourite things.

**PB: Do you have a preference for any particular type of fly?**

PS: I like what works. However, I always tend to pick flies that have sparkle woven into them or bright pink beads or feathers. The very first time I fished and my husband handed me the fly-box and said I could choose a fly to use, I chose a Mrs Simpson because I liked the look of them the most. Little did I know I would become Mrs Simpson myself one day!

I had a variation on the famous fly made up, tied and framed for my husband as a gift after our wedding and named it the "Pami Simpson".

I also have a salmon fly pinned to

my hat called The Pink Lady which I quite like, though I have never fished it.

**PB: Do you tie your own flies?**

PS: Erm, no, although I think it might be a hobby I could try out one day. Watching Ed Herbst and Gordon Van der Spuy tie flies at a recent Vice Squad demonstration at the CPS clubroom showed me just how involved and skilled it is. I was fascinated — it's a true art form.

**PB: Is there anything that you feel could be done to stimulate more interest and involvement of women in fly-fishing in SA?**

PS: More women being more vocal about enjoying the sport will definitely help as it could encourage someone like my former self to see it as something other than a pastime only "boys" would enjoy. "For women, by women" would help avoid any potential miscommunication and patronising tones.

I like to read articles by women, see pictures of women with their catches, and would love to be able to discuss the "female" side of fishing with more like-minded, like-gendered folk.

Practically, a ladies' line of fishing gear with a more feminine cut would do wonders for me. I love to fish, but I still want to look like a woman while I'm doing it.

**PB: Any additional thoughts, comments or views on any aspect of the sport?**

PS: I love that with flyfishing there are so many different avenues to explore, and there's always something to improve on, so never a dull moment. The saltwater bug hasn't bitten yet, but I'm always willing to try catch a new fish in a new way at least once. I really enjoy the magazines and articles, especially the personal accounts and humorous anecdotes.

**PB: Do you have any other interests?**

PS: I enjoy spending all my down time with my husband — we do (almost) everything together.

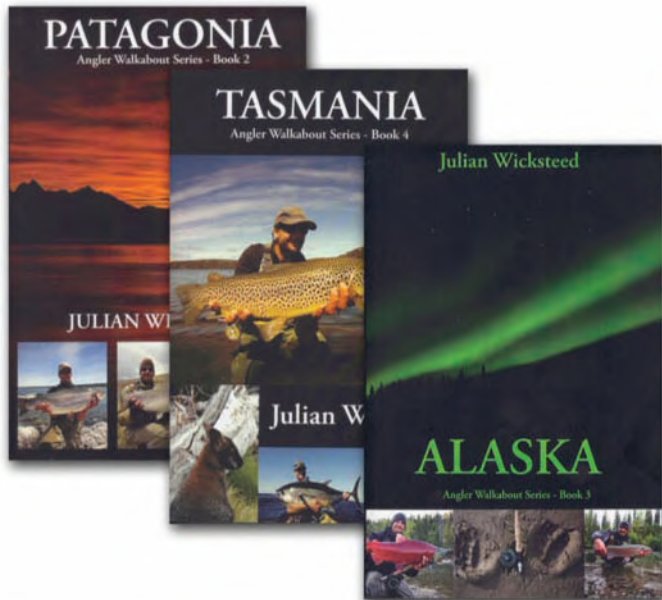
I'm very much a people's person and so love to spend time with family and friends, cooking dinners, having braais, or just sitting in each others lounges drinking red wine.

I am quite active and love to ski, do crossfit, pilates and yoga, but I also really enjoy relaxing for whole weekends at a time where I do nothing but read, write and listen to music. The piano is my favourite instrument and the one I teach.

Pop-culture fascinates me, as do shoes, and I love to keep an eye on fashion trends although I'm not always that keen to join in. See-through yoga pants? Brogues? No thank you!

I blog, tweet and get sucked into social media a little too much — candifloss for the brain — and enjoy getting ridiculously obsessed with series like *Sons of Anarchy* and *Downton Abbey*.





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By 2pm on Saturday 17th October 2014 we were well into the practical part of a weekend course on catching yellowfish on fly at Vaal Hackle near Parys. With most of my fellow "students" already glowing with the chip of a decent yellow or two on their shoulders, I was determined to up my personal best of maybe 500g and was trying to get the hang of the presentation with my humble 5-wt Sensation Symphony rod and reel combo set.

I applied what we'd been taught in the morning's theory session and placed a small orange hotspot fly on a 3x leader, weighted by a large Rock Worm pattern just in the wake of a big solitary rock in midstream. In textbook fashion all hell broke loose!

What felt like the rock itself took off like a "skinderstorie in Heilbron" and seemed to just keep doing that all around me. The rush of the adrenalin and the whining of the reel made it hard for me to hear the guide's instructions as he shouted over the noise of the stream, but I finally pulled myself together and managed to guide this 5kg beauty safely into my net. After two quick snaps it was back in the river. Moments like these create memories that last a lifetime.

Since that day I have still not properly gathered myself and doubt I ever will. I keep hearing these voices in my head saying things like: "Must fish! When are we going again? There must be bigger ones! Go fish now!" The doctor seems to think the only things that could save me are that kickboat and waders of yours!



• **Congratulations Gert on your tremendous catch (and release).**

**Please contact Frontier Fly Fishing on (011) 463-9048/9 to arrange collection or delivery of your prize.**

## Win great prizes when you release your catch

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This is how it works: Submit your catch-and-release photograph with a short story about where and how the fish was caught and what fly was used.

The competition is limited to freshwater fish caught in South Africa within a year of entering.

E-mail your entry to <angler@mags.co.za>, or post it to Frontier Fly Fishing Freshwater Catch-and-Release Competition, PO Box 20545, Durban North 4016.

FLYFISHING will feature the photo of the winning fly-fisher, and each issue a winner will be chosen. The winner will receive the kickboat, waders and two fly-lines valued at R7 950, compliments of Frontier Fly Fishing.

So go out there and get 'em — and don't forget to take along your camera for that all-important photograph prior to release.



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# THE DEVIL is in THE DETAIL

Be open to learning and you'll improve a lot

I'VE never really ever been a super hot fisherman; don't get me wrong, I'm not totally useless, but I've been a very average flyfisherman my whole life. Mind you, I was a very average tyer too at one stage. A while back I made a plan to become a bit better, more skillful. Basically I decided to work a bit harder at my fishing, so I put in a few more hours and concentrated a little harder as opposed to doing what I'd always done before.

Flyfishing has never been a numbers game for me, but I must admit that if I spent 20 years fishing and didn't

catch a single thing I probably would've given up a long time ago. Yes, it is about being in nature, sure, but hiking does that for you too. I fish because I like fishing — I like catching fish, it's cool and one shouldn't feel ashamed of it. So basically, yes, I did set out to catch more fish, but, more importantly, I set out to learn how to catch those fish I previously would've battled with. I'd done a similar thing with my tying and that paid off too — you'll be amazed at what a bit of extra effort can do.

I once heard someone say that to

become an expert at something you need to practice the said activity for 10 000 hours. Well, I disagree — it's possible to do something very badly for years on end. Look at golfers as a prime example; I've met guys who've been an 18 handicap for as long as they can remember.

Fishing is no different really — it's possible to be a very average or bad angler for a very long time and if you're doing the same things over and over again your results will more or less stay the same.

Conversely, it is also possible to

A Para RAB tied by David Taylor,  
a member of the Custom Tyers' Collective.







Trahernes Fra Diavolo dressed by the author. Anything is possible if you pay attention to detail. Photo by Tom Sutcliffe.

become very proficient at something in a short time span provided you focus and work hard. Luke Baker, a 17-year-old Western Province competition angler, is a prime example. The boy received the silver medal at this year's Men's National flyfishing competition, fishing against anglers who were more than twice his age. These guys have had years more than Luke to fish, so if the 10 000 hours rule was true, surely Luke shouldn't have done so well?

The truth is, talent is talent, regardless of how old it is. Mozart comes to mind. "Ah, but Mozart was an exception," I hear you say. Perhaps he was, but Luke Baker is not.

We are seeing more and more of these youngsters coming up the ranks and these chaps are as fanatical as you can get. And no, it's not about the numbers for these guys either, they just love fishing. They work at it and it gives them a kick to catch a fish which seems impossible to catch. I've seen Dan Factor and Nick van Rensburg both go into what I call "Ninja mode", where they stick on a particular fish and take their time until they crack him. It might take them an hour, but the point is that I have seen fish caught which I would've deemed impossible to catch. If it was merely about numbers then surely these guys would've moved on and targeted easier candidates?

I spent time looking at what they were doing and asking questions, and

what I noticed was that they were far more focused on the details of what they were doing than I was. Natural talent can only take you so far — detail gets you the rest of the way. Not that I'm a natural talent, I'm not, but an average guy who pays attention to detail can move past average very quickly.

The important thing is to have the basics in place first; detail without a solid foundation doesn't help you — it's a bit like going on an advanced drivers' course before knowing the concept of clutch control!

Natural talent  
can only take  
you so far —  
detail gets you  
the rest of the way.

Basically the 10 000 hour rule would work if those 10 000 hours were quality hours during which the participant was fully focused on what he or she was doing.

For some people focus is a natural thing, for others it requires a bit more

discipline. I'm a bit of a dawdler, always have been, so I had to go the discipline route — I had to concentrate and concentrate hard.

Fishing with people who fish better than you does a few things, including forcing you to become a little more analytical. In the beginning you kind of wonder what the guy is doing differently to you — he casts normally, even fishes the same fly as you, but he outfishes you ten to one. Are the numbers important? Well, not from a numbers perspective, but from a technical perspective, yes, very much so. If you're doing the same thing as the guy you're fishing with then the result should be more or less the same, right?

This is the crux of the matter: a lot of guys are ignorant about tiny nuances and details. If you could change one small thing which would result in you doubling your catch rate, would you do it? Hell yes! I actually did and it worked.

Perhaps you just need to fish a more efficient leader set up — analyse whether your leader turns over properly and works well in the drift. After all, your leader plays a major role in you managing drag during the drift. Working to get drag-free drifts is pretty much par for the course, so if you have more drag-free drifts it will generally result in more fish eating the fly — and all you did was change the leader!

Knots and connections are another



This late season Smalblaar rainbow was taken under difficult conditions. A small detail like sinking the tippet can make a huge difference to your success. Photo by Robin Douglas.



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detail that's often overlooked. From a small stream perspective, Nail Knots and loop to loop connections on a leader are sloppy and yet very popular. The truth is, they are just not efficient. Small knots are cleaner and offer less resistance in the drift. Micro drag can be an issue, and small things like neater, cleaner connections can make a huge difference.

Similarly, while nymphing, a small detail like tippet diameter can make a huge difference. Thinner tippets get the fly down faster because there's less resistance on the sink. Basically your fly spends more time *in* the zone as opposed to getting *to* the zone. "5x is 5x," I hear you say. Well, in reality, some 5x tippets are just more efficient than others.

I could continue, but you get the picture — there are many small things that can help you; tiny subtle little things that make a *moer* of a difference. I actually wrote a piece about some of this stuff a while back — *How to become a river ninja* (see the February 2015 issue of *FLYFISHING magazine*) — read it, it's not bad.

The way to really wrap your head around this stuff is to fish with people who can fish and to actually let them help you. Speak to any guide and you'll hear horror stories of clients who were hell bent on doing things their way — to their own detriment, of course. Sometimes not allowing yourself to be taught is the only thing standing in your way.

I once had a guy who came in for a private fly-tying lesson. What unnerved me a bit was this guy's bad attitude in the beginning; he was almost dismissive of what I was telling him.

After 15 minutes his mood seemed to suddenly change and after that it was a pleasure teaching him. At the end of the lesson I took a major risk and asked him straight: "What was your beef when you walked in here today?"

"Sorry about that," he said, "I walked in here today thinking there was nothing you could possibly teach me, but I realised today how little I actually know."

Truth be told, the more you learn the more you realise how little you know. Teaching people to tie has taught me a great deal about tying. These guys think I'm teaching them, but the reverse is just as true; I've picked up amazing little tips from students. The point is, I'm open to learn, and I think if you approach things with that mindset you're doing yourself a big favour.

Getting better at something is easy if you actually understand what you need to be doing to be more efficient. Knowledge without true understanding is pointless, so find someone who can teach you about the details — and go to them with an open mind.



# INTRODUCING THE CUSTOM TYERS' COLLECTIVE

By Gordon van der Spuy

THE Custom Tyers' Collective started recently in Cape Town when one of the junior competitive anglers complained to me that he lacked funds to upgrade his tackle. I'd been fishing with the youngster and had noticed that his tackle was less than satisfactory.

"You seriously need to buy a new line," I said.

"With what?" came the reply. "I'm broke."

"Why don't you guys tie comp style flies that the public can buy from you?" I suggested.

"We'll never make money — if we charge R8 a fly we'll make R2 a fly, if that. There's no point in doing it really." That's when I got the idea to start what is now known as The Custom Tyers' Collective. The idea behind the project is to develop fly-tying skills in young tyers and to equip them financially to continue developing their skills in both their tying and fishing.

We are blessed with some exceptionally talented junior flyfishers in this country; one only needs to take a look at the SAFFA Mens A Nationals results of 2015

to realise this — the top 10 positions were largely dominated by younger anglers. In fact, the gold, silver and bronze were all taken by younger anglers who've come up through the ranks.

It's also a fact that commercially available flies in this country are generally lacking in the quality department. Ideally I would advocate tying your own because that way you'll get what you want every time, but if you can't do that you need to purchase flies from a source that understands what quality is. South African flyfishers are not accustomed to high quality, commercially available flies. Well, perhaps that's not true in the tigerfish and saltwater categories, but when it comes to fine dry flies, small nymphs and decent damsels and dragons there is definitely a problem. Just try to find a decent Para RAB, Papa Roach, Zonker Minnow, Shuttlecock or Zak Nymph in a shop — you're going to look long and hard.



**Top:** David Taylor, one of the Collective's tyers with a beautiful brown from the Witte. **Centre:** Gordon van der Spuy carefully examines Dylan Elliot's flies before approving them for sale to the public. **Bottom and right:** Some of the flies tied by members of the collective.

Commercially tied flies are tied quickly and nastily — they are not tied with the love and dedication that the fishing fly-tyer generally affords the patterns that roll off his or her vice.

Enter The Custom Tyers' Collective — a group of fly-tyers, all fishermen too, most of them competition anglers, who tie flies for sale to the public. The flies are tied by school goers and students who use the funds received to further their love for fishing. I screen every fly that goes out to ensure that the customer gets the best.

The programme is geared towards mentoring these children to tie better, so only the best hooks, materials and beads are used and only the best flies are approved for sale. If a fly is not up to standard we won't sell it, *klaar!* I have on occasion had to make children retie flies, and I feel bad doing it, but standards are standards and the only way to improve is to have high standards.

The project aims to develop young tyers and educate them by ensuring that they work to the highest standards possible. You will go a long way to find flies that are comparable to these. Sure, they are

more expensive than anything else out there, but that is also reflected in the quality of the flies. South Africans have become accustomed to buying cheap imported flies from places like Malawi, Kenya and India and yes, those flies do catch fish, but at the end of the day custom-tied flies are better fish-catching tools because they're tied by fishermen for fishermen with the goal of actually catching fish.

The average price for a custom-tied fly in America is about \$2.50, in Europe it's about 3 Euros — our flies cost R20 a fly and the tyers receive R15/fly. It's not bad, considering what you are getting. Anyone who can tie is welcome to be part of the project, but be warned, the standard is high — you need to be one helluva tyer to be part of the project.

Please contact me at <gordon.vanderspuy@gmail.com> for more details.





# WELCOME

To the



Kamberg  
Trout Festival  
2015







Brandon Karg's 62cm cockfish and Frank Ferguson's 69cm beauty (opposite page) earned them second and first place respectively. Team Wildfly — Grevin Price, John Bromilow, Gareth George and Simon Bunn — were the top team (above, far right).

IT'S usually standard policy to save a bit of space at the end of a competition report to thank the sponsors on behalf of the participants, but, this time I've turned things around a bit. It has become very clear that in times when it is increasingly difficult for brands to continue digging deep into their budgets to sponsor events, Tops at Spar has not only maintained their status as the premier sponsor of a premier event, but just seem to get more and more generous each year. In addition to overall sponsorship, the goodie-bags were out of this world, sporting all sorts of high-end items for the flyfishers.

Tops are not the only generous sponsors at this event — Xplorer Flyfishing, Jonsson Workwear, Rapala South Africa, Shimano, Wildfly, Spar, Reddington, Rio Products, Easy Holidays, Peak Trout, Loon Outdoors, Natal Fly Fishers Club, Fishtube TV, Chota Outdoor Gear, Wildflytravel.com, Roam Free and Bushmans River Trout all contributed to making the participants feel spoilt.

For a townie like myself who makes an annual pilgrimage to the Kamberg to celebrate this particular festival with many like minded individuals, I decided to really let the surroundings sink in and analyse afresh what the appeal is.

The natural surroundings are an obvious salve to any frazzled spirit, but I caught myself pausing to take in the road and signage in general and realised that two worlds actually co-exist — the Kamberg Valley where things seem to amble along at a slower pace, and everything outside the Kamberg with its hustle and bustle and dog-eat-dog doctrine where life runs along run at a frenetic pace. Hopefully the

Morne Breytenbach (right) was happy with this pretty rainbow, while Juan Rossouw (below) had a more unusual catch.







photos of the signs dotted around these few pages will bring a smile to your face too and encourage you to visit this area where life goes by more slowly.

So, with all the necessary ingredients in place — generous sponsorship, a fantastic organising committee, legendary stillwaters made available by the local riparian owners and a collection of flyfishers chomping at the bit — we can now focus on what the Kamberg Trout Festival is all about.

In the last couple of years the festival has gone through a metamorphosis in keeping with the evolving ethics of flyfishing. Initially the event allowed for certain fish to be kept by anglers and every evening there were long queues at the weigh-in table. Last year a strict release system was employed which based overall results on the total combined length of trout caught by an individual and the collective lengths of a team for team standings. To the absolute credit of the Kamberg Trout Festival committee, ably assisted by Wildfly, I believe that with the latest tweak to the rules they have it perfectly right.

First off, it's compulsory for teams to submit catch returns at the end of a day on the water. This ensures that the data necessary for assessing restocking of dams and the growth rate of trout in line with recent stockings can be analysed. The release ethic was once again strongly embraced by flyfishers and committee alike, although flyfishers were given the choice of weighing in any trout 60cm in length and over. And before you ask, yes, these trout do exist in the Kamberg and are there for the taking. However, the more likely scenario is of them running you into your backing and breaking off, leaving you shaking in their impressive wakes.

Once again I was in the company of some great individuals who made up our team. To John During, Morne Breitenbach (all the way from Germany) and Juan Rossouw (Wildfly), thank you for helping me remember it's not so much about how many trout you can catch, but rather about the people with whom you share the experience.

A further bonus for me this year was being able to fish some stillwaters located in the Maloti Drakensberg Park World

Heritage Site — a first for me. It was on one of these waters that I witnessed something I have never seen before.

Juan had already lost a very good fish in the final stages of a worthy tussle when, hearing the tell tale sounds of a trout moving amongst the reeds nearby, he presented a perfect cast bang on the target. After a brief pause and two strips he was solidly into what he thought was surely a mighty trout. The very next second a great commotion ensued — the mighty “trout” had shrunk, sprouted wings and attempted to take flight, putting Juan into his backing before he could get his mind around it.

The winged trout — a young dabchick aka Little Grebe — was duly brought to hand. After the barbless fly had been removed and many soft words of encouragement whispered in its ear it was released, hopefully a little wiser than before.

The fishing proved challenging over the four sessions, with the first two on the first day being accompanied by gusting winds. Fortunately there was a bit of relief on the second day for the final two sessions' fishing.

As always certain individuals managed astounding results and fully deserved both the praise and prizes they received for their achievements in a field of 160 flyfishers. Individual honours for the largest trout — a 4.1kg rainbow hen of 69cm caught on a Red-Eyed Damsel — went to Frank Ferguson who was named top individual angler of the competition and received the John Armstrong floating trophy.

Runner up was Brandon Karg with a stunning 62cm cockfish weighing 2.7kg. After a three-year absence from local waters it seems Brandon still has the touch; he managed to record an impressive 22 fish averaging 40cm (16 inches) over the two days.

Team winners were WildFly with a runaway total of over 60 fish between them. For the full list of results visit <[www.wildfly.co.za](http://www.wildfly.co.za)>.

Make a note now to book your place at this event next year and experience all that the Kamberg Valley has to offer. I guarantee you will not be disappointed. For further details visit <[www.kambergtroutfestival.co.za](http://www.kambergtroutfestival.co.za)>.





# IMITATIVE FLY GUY:

An individual who pretends to fish but  
has just come along for the drinks.



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# DOES SIZE MATTER?

It depends on your perspective



The angler's pose and angle of the photo can make a *b-i-g* difference to how big your fish looks.

**O**f course size doesn't matter! This isn't Texas and flyfishing isn't about always being bigger and better, right? Then again, they say that stage three of the five stages of being a fisherman is all about size:

- Stage 1: I just want to catch a fish, just *one* fish — *any* fish.
- Stage 2: I want to catch a *lot* of fish, all the fish. Fish, fish, fish!
- Stage 3: I want to catch *big* fish — and tell everyone I've ever met about it.
- Stage 4: I want to catch the *elusive* fish.
- Stage 5: I don't care if I catch fish or not, I'm just happy to be out fishing. (Some people trade this up for the "I-want-to-pass-on-my-knowledge-and-passion-for-fishing" stage.)

In my experience, fishermen of all stages tend to get a little stuck on number three. Call it what you will, in our watery world size seems to matter a great deal. To prove my point, just ask any fisherman to tell you about his latest catch. Very few will say "Oh, it was a teeny tiny yellow" or simply, "It was a tiger". No, they're far more likely to quantify their answers using the metric system as a defining feature.

So what is it about size that has us all so fixated?

Fishermen are traditionally known for telling tales. A story told over and over by the same salty seadog eventually ends up much bigger and more elaborate than what it began and reality really has very little to do with it. "This big" becomes "*T-b-i-s* big" and no one knows the truth at the end of the day, not even the storyteller himself. He too is lost in the adventure of his own fantastical fable.

Always one for a good story, I don't think this is necessarily a bad thing. Only a true fisherman knows that feeling, that moment when you catch your fish, and the exhilaration of the fight is something that can't be retold in muted tones. The fish that eventually lands in your net has become such a highlight of your trip, a glittering beacon of excitement, that in


your eyes, it really is *t-b-i-s* big.

I see it written all over our walls in photo frames at home. To see the smile on my husband's face as he holds up a longfin tuna for the camera, he may as well be lifting Moby Dick out of the water. His expression tells a much bigger story than the actual dimensions of the fish, and his tale will be the thing to grow around the braai long after that fish was released back into the ocean. The catch is immortalised, a fable somewhere between fact and fiction, or "faction".

Alas, the non-fishing folk of your life just won't get it — all they do is roll their eyes as you talk about the monster you extracted from the pre-historic deep.

So we have a new trick to "prove" just how big our catch was. It's all about camera angles — "this big" becomes "*t-b-i-s* big" in an instant, and you have photographic evidence to support your exciting tale. As a taller-than-average woman, I know never to be in the foreground of a group photo unless I want to look like a giant next to everyone else. As a fisherwoman, this vain knowledge works wonders! It turns out that holding a fish out ahead of you as your buddy clicks the shot will not only capture your moment in the sun, but will also shush the naysayers in a flash.

A while back I had an amazing opportunity to fish the River Tay in Scotland and the highlight was fighting a wild, river running salmon to the net. On its own that makes for a good story and a great picture, but just look at the photos above taken by Stuart, my guide for the day. He's a man who understands the need to talk up a fish and maximise photo potential — perfectly angled, perfectly "factional". Now, which one do you think I had framed?

I'd say for the most part I'm still a Stage two angler with a lot to learn, but I never go anywhere without being armed with that one photo from that one time of that one fish that was *t-b-i-s* big. 





# STEALTH<sup>®</sup> Fly Fishing Junior Flyfishers

**C**COURTNEY Wollhuter (15) caught his very first trout just one day before his 15th birthday. He landed this beauty on a cold, misty morning in East Griqualand using a Red Eyed Damsel. Courtney was given a fly-tying set and a second hand rod and reel in December. After a long trial period and many largemouth bass, the weather cooled enough to bring those elusive trout on the bite. In his case the wait was definitely worth it with this beauty weighing 4.5kg.



**THAT'S  
FANTASTIC  
COURTNEY!**

**S**HYLO Geldenhuys (9), and her family went on a day trip to Arendsnes in November. Shylo's dad set up a Stealth rod for her and Shylo soon had her fly drifting downstream. The next moment a muddy took the fly. Shylo reeled it in with her dad helping to land it with the net. The fish was successfully released back into the water and Shylo was very proud of her first fish on fly.



**WELL DONE  
SHYLO!**

**N**IKHIL Rooplal (9) caught this beautiful yellowfish on the Vaal River whilst fishing with his dad. What made this fish really special was that it was Nikhil's first fish caught on a fly tied by himself and it ran him downstream almost into his backing. There was great excitement as Nikhil reeled all the fly-line back in.



The fish was taken on the fly that Nikhil fondly named Nik's Green Caddis Special. It was one of three yellowfish taken on the day.

Nikhil has been casting and playing with a fly-rod since he was three years old and won't be stopping any time soon.

**GOOD JOB  
NIKHIL!**

**T**IMOTHY Kok (8) is fortunate enough to spend lots of time on a private farm just outside Dullstroom. Earlier this year on an April weekend he grabbed his Stealth 5-wt rod and headed to the dam in front of their house.

Timothy cast his floating line into the middle of the dam and about 30 seconds later this lovely rainbow trout grabbed his green Woolly Bugger. It gave him quite a fright, but he managed to get it to the shore. This was the first trout Timothy caught by himself and weighed just over 1.2kg.



**GREAT CATCH  
TIMOTHY!**

## CALLING ALL JUNIOR FLYFISHERS!

**F**LYFISHING magazine, in conjunction with, Stealth Fly Rod (Pty) Ltd, is proud to offer all junior flyfishers the opportunity to win awards for excellence in flyfishing. If you are 16 years or younger, and submit a photograph of yourself and the fish you caught, you will be eligible to receive — in recognition of your achievement — some great goodies from Stealth and FLYFISHING magazine. Upon ratification, all junior flyfishers who submit entries will receive a handsome certificate suitably inscribed, plus a Stealth cap and a fly box. And there's more ... At the end of a year, the names of all junior flyfishers whose photographs appeared on the Junior Flyfishers' page will be included in a lucky draw. The winner of the draw will receive a magnificent Stealth fly-rod and reel. **What a prize!**

Keep those photos rolling in – By post or email:  
angler@mags.co.za

### Rules:

1. Anglers must be under the age of 16 years at the time the fish was caught.
2. A good quality photograph of the angler and the fish must be submitted. In the event of a released fish, a photograph of the angler with his/her rod and reel at the venue where the fish was released, will also be acceptable.
3. Include an 80-word story on how, when and where the angler caught/released the fish as well as a written statement that the fish was caught on recognised fly tackle.
5. All entries should be sent to: Junior Flyfisher Competition, Flyfishing Magazine, PO Box 20545, Durban North 4016 or e-mail <angler@mags.co.za>.
6. Each junior flyfisher submitting a photo entry will receive one cap and fly box each, regardless of the number of different entries submitted.





# FISH ON

## 2015 Oxbow May Day Competition

**T**HE first day of May once again saw Oxbow Country Estate hosting its annual flyfishing competition which kickstarts the fishing season at Oxbow every year. This event is now one of the biggest flyfishing fun days in Gauteng and is booked out well in advance.

On arrival the flyfishers were greeted by a perfect morning temperature of -2°C! The air was thick with excitement and the early morning mist that we've come to expect rising from the Top Dam, with trout jumping freely to tease the anglers.

It could have been the muffins and hot coffee or the knowledge of the recent stocking or the indication of early rises on the water, but whatever the cause, we were all filled with anticipation for the day ahead.

The event began with a short briefing by Rohan Koegelenberg, competition director, before we dispersed to fish our first of six beats. Beats were fished for 55 minutes each, giving us ample fishing time on each section. After the siren rang the lines whispered through the crisp morning air and flies danced on the undisturbed water ... it was game on!







It's been said that this competition can be won in the first few moments at the water's edge, and never has a truer word been spoken. Alan Simpkins landed six rainbow trout in his first session, all on a black Strip Leech. Alan walked away with the fabulous first prize after landing his first trout at 7.25am, narrowly beating the runner up by one minute! He went on to land a further four fish that day, taking his total to ten.

The ladies' trophy went to Marilize Heyns and the junior prize to Dylan Krenczeck. A total of 133 fish were landed and released throughout the day, with some dams producing exceptional catches and others challenging circumstances. The fish sizes ranged between 700g and 2kg.

A great feature of this event is the varying level of expertise among all the competitors, with some of South Africa's top flyfishers participating.

After an enjoyable prizegiving we tucked into a great meal to toast the end of another May Day. Sincere thanks to the many sponsors as well as the organisers of this event — Frank, Alison and Jade Lovell and Lyn Adams — for a great event.

Oxbow Country Estate would like to thank Tiger Fishing Zambezi, Shackletons and Comair for their sponsorship of the first prize for the event — a four-night stay at Shackletons Tiger Fishing Lodge, including flights to the venue. Thank you to all the other sponsors who also generously supported this well attended event. It was a real pleasure to see the diverse crowd competing against the greats of the flyfishing world; sharing tips and tricks and getting

to know one another with a common passion for the sport.

Oxbow Country Estate, located towards Pretoria East, just outside Bronkhorstspuit, is open from May to August and offers seasonal memberships or day fishing rates for winter trout flyfishing. For more information visit <[www.oxbowestate.co.za](http://www.oxbowestate.co.za)> or phone (013) 932-8000.

### COMPETITION RESULTS

Overall number of fish caught: 133

#### Men:

1st and overall winner: Alan Simpkins

10 fish, first fish at 7.25am

2nd place: Iwan van den Bergh

10 fish, first fish at 7.26am

3rd place: Johan Ferreira

7 fish, first fish at 7.32am

4th place: Trevor Viljoen

7 fish, first fish at 8.02am

5th place: Kiewiet de Waal, 6 fish

6th place: Daniel Factor, 5 fish

#### Ladies:

1st place: Marilize Heyns, 3 fish

2nd and 3rd: Lorna Krenczeck and Chantie Minnaar,  
1 fish each.

#### Juniors:

1st place: Dylan Krenczeck, 2 fish

2nd place: Micheal Krenczeck

3rd place: Hanroe Geyser





**O**UR family enjoys travelling our beautiful country, either to visit game parks, other places of special interest or to see family and friends. This usually requires long distance travel and frequent stopovers — Kruger Park and St Lucia are probably as far as one can travel from the south-western Cape in terms of RSA destinations.

From a flyfishing perspective, the joy of travelling far is the chance to fish attractive waters that you know well or new waters that you have longed to fish. My family know that when we travel — even though my wife always grumbles about it — a range of rods will be in the car.

Many people travel the N1, either heading down to the coast from upcountry or heading north, for business or pleasure, and long trips invariably require a stopover. I think I have found a near perfect stopover for flyfishers. It's almost halfway between Cape Town and Johannesburg, provides fantastic yellowfish fishing on appealing water and has a range of accommodation available in very pleasant scenery.

In December my daughter (Olivia), my wife and I had the pleasure of welcoming our 21-year-old son back from overseas after not seeing him for nearly 20 months. Like me, Blair enjoys fishing and flyfishing, although probably not

# ROAD

## The ideal N1 flyfishing stopover

quite to the same extent. To celebrate being together, we planned a trip from Cape Town that would include game viewing at Karoo National Park and some flyfishing on the Orange River just below the mighty Gariep Dam close to the N1 freeway bridge.

The Karoo National Park is much loved by nature lovers who know it well and for good reason. Apart from beautiful Karoo scenery and clear, unpolluted skies with dazzling starry nights, there are excellent facilities including a well laid out and serviced camping site and very attractive chalets. Despite the semi-desert Nama Karoo scenery, game is actually quite abundant with good sightings of gemsbok, kudu, hartebeest, springbok and zebra to be

expected. Lion have recently been re-introduced and are doing well. Visitors that have four-wheel-drive vehicles have the bonus of being able to use roads and parts of the park that are inaccessible to other vehicles.

After two restful and enjoyable days at the park, during which a considerable amount of delicious Karoo lamb was braaied, we headed off to the Orange. My son and I had not flyfished together for yellowfish for nearly three years, so you can imagine the excitement when we saw the beautiful Orange River with its varied habitat and rising fish.

I have had mixed success on the Orange and find it a much tougher option than the Vaal where I have



The inviting waters of the Orange River.



Blair Impson releasing his catch.



# TRIP

enjoyed consistent success with the yellowfish flyfishing methods I use. My tactics include dead-drifting with a strike indicator or casting across stream, allowing the flies to sink and then using an active retrieve. From what I've heard, Czech nymphing is very effective on the Orange, especially in the Richtersveld, and this is where I've come short in the past as I don't use the technique.

We stayed at and fished two venues on the Orange, one a short distance below the dam wall (Orange River Tented Camp) and the other just above the N1 bridge (River Destiny Lodge).

A word of caution for anyone fishing this stretch of river — flows are regulated by the dam and there is a massive increase in flow for a few hours each day when water is released from the bottom valves for electricity genera-

tion. This changes the river from being very wade-able and fishable with a moderate flow (provided the dam is not overflowing), to a river that appears to be in flood and is hazardous to fish.

For this reason I am extremely careful when fishing the river below the dam and make sure that when the flow starts to increase, the river bank and a safe exit route are close at hand. If you plan to fish at either of these destinations it's a good idea to find out when flows are likely to be at their minimum and at what times water is released each day.

Another important factor to keep in mind in terms of planning a stopover here, is that the dam has a bottom release when the river is not in flood, so the river water released is cool even in the middle of summer. For this reason, flyfishing for yellowfish is probably

best in the warmer months (November to March) when daytime temperatures heat the released water quickly which increases fish activity and feeding.

At the Orange River Tented Camp, the best option for fishing is to walk upstream from the appealing and private riverside tented chalets which are on a steep and mostly inaccessible bank. Use the dirt road next to the camp and walk to where the river bank flattens and the river can be seen. Here you'll find a very long pool that stretches almost up to the dam wall which can easily be seen. Fish habitat is superb and there are usually signs of fish everywhere — rises, swirls and jumping fish.

When water is not being released the flow is low and river depth is mostly around 1m with a very rocky bottom. It is not necessary to wade because casting is easy from the bank and plenty of good fishing water is right in front of you, but one can get into the water and wade a short distance from the bank. However, be reminded of the cautionary note above regarding dam releases which this section of the river experiences first. I would not want to be wading in the middle of the river when the flows starts rising.

What is interesting is that the best fishing seems to happen after the alarm bell signals the release of water from the dam and the flow starts to rise.



The author with his best smallmouth yellowfish of the trip.



Olivia Impson fighting a yellow. Note the N1 bridge in the distance.



Thankfully it is not a wall of water that comes down, but rather a steady increase over 30 to 60 minutes. It's very noticeable, though, and I have seen the river rise more than a metre over this period. During this time there is a marked increase in fish activity and fish seem to migrate to the banks to take advantage of insects which have been flushed from the vegetated margins by the increased flow.

I have tried various techniques here and have found upstream dead-drift fishing using two nymphs unsuccessful. What seems to work well is to use a floating line (5-wt combo) and cast at 90° to the river bank with about 5-10m of fly-line out.

Mayfly patterns have been the most successful for me and I usually fish a fast sinking larger pattern like a #10 bead-head Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear on the dropper and a smaller unweighted black mayfly nymph on the point. Flies are given five to ten seconds to sink depending on the likely depth (you don't want to be hooking the bottom all the time) and then the flies are retrieved in short twitch movements, making sure I stay in contact with the flies.

There is something very gratifying about the take which is usually sharp and obvious, and reminds me of stillwater fishing for rainbow trout. In the

cool water the yellows fight superbly, with fish ranging in weight from 500g to 2kg. Fish are beautifully streamlined and in the peak of health. I have only caught smallmouth yellows there, but then that's what I was targeting. No doubt there are largemouths too as well as good numbers of muddies and carp in slower flowing areas. Towards the tail of the pool there are deeper, slow flowing areas next to reed beds where Blair caught a rather plump but handsome muddy of about 1.5kg.

Our second day was spent at River Destiny Lodge, a resort just above the N1 bridge and a few kilometres downstream from the Tented Camp. This resort offers very pleasant camping, chalets and entertainment facilities. The river is about 50m from the chalets closest to the N1 and is easily accessible, but this area comprises another very long, wide pool and is favoured by the bank anglers. At low flow the water looks deep but is surprisingly shallow and it is possible to wade a bit from the bank and target yellowfish which are in abundance. Whilst Blair and I took a break from flyfishing, my wife and Olivia had fun catching decent sized yellows on bread bait.

The best water is at the bridge and downstream of the bridge. This requires a 300-400m walk on a track — get advice from the resort owners on

how to find it. The range of habitat here is mouthwatering, with deep glides, shallow riffles and fast rapids (especially when the flow is increasing), as well as quiet backwaters. Yellowfish are everywhere. For those who love pretty rivers that are full of yellowfish this is a delightful section of river to fish. The only distraction is the noise of the nearby N1, especially as lorries cross the bridge, but once you have a yellowfish on and a screaming reel, these road sounds tend to be a minor distraction.

Blair and I enjoyed great success using the tactics described above and caught about 30 smallmouth yellows over two days with fish averaging around 1kg. My best smallmouth was about 2.5kg and took more than five minutes to land after taking me at the end of a 10m cast. On a previous trip Blair caught a 2kg largemouth in this area, so they are there and no doubt there are some big specimens of both yellowfish species in the deeper, calmer sections of the river.

It's really worth stopping off at these little spots, but again, please take special care of yourself and your loved ones when the water starts rising after a release from the dam — the bank must be nearby and it must be possible to reach higher ground with ease.

Happy roadtripping.





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## BIG BASS & *Small Flies*

Conventional wisdom  
isn't always right



**T**HAT much quoted beast “conventional wisdom” dictates that big bass eat big flies. This is certainly true, but what conventional wisdom fails to mention is that big bass also eat small flies. So do medium sized bass and smaller, although still a worthwhile catch on fly, sized bass.

The more I fish for these thugs with fins the more I realised that big is not always better for bass. In fact, one of my biggest fly-caught bass was taken on a no.10 Zonker fished through the weed beds at Craigieburn Dam. After I had wrestled the fish to the kickboat in true bass angler style — pull as hard as you can and hope nothing breaks — she weighed in at well over 3kg; a broad-flanked monster of a bass that filled the landing net and left me dry mouthed and shaking.

Small flies — and here I’m talking small bass flies in sizes 8 and 10, not tiny trout flies — have many advantages over the large patterns normally advocated for bass. Small patterns are easy to cast accurately, and where bass are concerned casting tight to structure is often essential. Small patterns also

tend to elicit less scrutiny and suspicion from the fish and one gets the impression that they are sometimes eaten as an afterthought, a quick nibble just to tide the fish over. Finally, small flies can be fished on lighter tackle and this can make for a much more comfortable day when one is spending long hours on the water.

The down side of small patterns is that baby bass love them, and in waters that are overpopulated with tiny bass one rapidly tires of unhooking hordes of juvenile fish. In situations like this the use of bigger flies is essential, even if only to intimidate the youth.

Small patterns come into their own in big, heavily fished impoundments like Midmar, Albert Falls and Inanda dams. These large waters experience extremely heavy angling pressure from the bass angling fraternity and it’s a fair bet that the fishy inhabitants are intimately familiar with just about every type of bass lure, from plastic worms that slither through the weed to large crank baits that rattle and hum past all the fish-holding structure like traffic on a busy highway.

It’s also reasonable to assume that, having found that they



This big bass fell for an Adolf fly, while a no. 8 Red Setter accounted for the bass pictured at the top of the page.



**This decent sized bass (right) fell for a small Strip Leech. Trevor Trollip (centre) caught this bass on fly in Inanda Dam, but Shongweni Dam (bottom) outside Durban is another productive bass venue.**

offer more pain than protein, bigger fish will have learnt to ignore large, flashy offerings be they lures or flies. In these heavily fished waters a no. 10 or no. 8 Zonker or similar pattern will often produce good bass, even from a piece of water that has just been fished by anglers using conventional bass tackle and lures. By way of illustration, I've seen a fly-rodder at Inanda take three good bass on virtually consecutive throws while fishing a small streamer past a reed bed that had just been fished without result by at least two boatloads of artificial lure anglers.

Where big bass flies are deadly is in small dams that do not receive a lot of angling pressure. In spots like this, less worldly wise lunker bass see an enormous pattern as something that will keep them happily digesting for a good while and save them the hassle of going hunting for meals that may well fight back. Territorial aggression also plays a role and big bass in less fished waters will be inclined to remonstrate with flashy intruders whereas their frequently caught cousins in heavily fished waters would probably be surprised to spend a day without being irritated by big shiny things bearing hooks and will have learnt to ignore them.

When selecting smaller flies for bass the trick is to find a small pattern that looks substantial in the water — something with a bit of “presence”. That way you enjoy the advantages of fishing with a small fly while giving the bass the impression that something worth eating is trundling past his front door.

Flies that fit the bill include Zonkers, Strip Leeches and some of the saltwater patterns like small Deceivers and High Tie Polar Fibre Minnows. These patterns have a slim profile, cast like bullets and, once in the water the materials flare out, making the pattern look substantial. Another small fly that good bass seem to find irresistible is the Red Setter. This pattern has the added advantage that it is also an excellent tilapia fly and as bass and tilapia species cohabit in many of our dams there is always the chance of adding some variety to the day by hooking into a big blue or red-breast.

The best colour for bass flies is certainly the colour the angler feels most confident using. I know folk who have caught an awful lot of good fish and who swear by brightly coloured flies while others go for the natural look and stick to sombre olives and blacks.

Working on the theory that bass in heavily fished waters will have a “seen that, ate it once and it hurt” attitude towards brightly coloured, unnatural looking flies, I tend to favour the natural look for popular dams and save the bright colours for seldom fished waters. Of the more natural colours, black is excellent with olive a close second. Amongst the unnatural hues, hot orange, yellow, purple, white and red all produce at times.

In angling, as in anything, it is healthy to challenge conventional wisdom and, while I would never dispute the effectiveness of big flies for big bass, there can be no doubt that small patterns can be just as effective in the right situation.

For fly-rodders serious about bassing, the best way of covering all the options is to carry two outfits — a 6-wt for small patterns and an 8- or even 9-wt for big flies and areas of heavy structure. I always carry the two when I'm out bassing, but end up having so much fun with the lighter outfit that I honestly can't remember when last I actually used the heavier.





*How to fish like a*  
**BASS PRO**



Part 2: More secrets unveiled



**I**N the June/July 2015 issue of *FLYFISHING* magazine Rolfe Deppe shared eight of his “secrets” to targeting bass on fly-rod. Hours on the water spent fishing for this species have taught him a thing or two, and in this issue he shares more tips he’s picked up along the way...

### SECRET #9

Grab peak periods with both hands. Most days there will be one or two 20-30 minute periods when adult bass will feed more aggressively. These may or may not coincide with a prime time, but if they do you are in for some wild fishing!

There is a fairly widely accepted theory (Solunar) that wildlife activity is strongly influenced by moon phase and it’s possible that this drives some of these peak periods. I’ve tried to follow peak Solunar periods (predictive charts are available) but frankly they haven’t helped me much at all. What is important to realise that when they happen you need to fish hard while it lasts — put down that sandwich and fish like your life depends on it!

Rapid changes in atmospheric pressure (rising barometric pressure is good, dropping usually isn’t) due to storms or approaching cold fronts can also drive or suppress feeding activity. The classic scenario is the period whilst

a summer thunderstorm is brewing overhead — the atmospheric pressure spikes and usually bass go on a feeding binge until just before the rain starts. I’ve fished a few of these sessions (at risk of life and limb) and some have been truly epic, especially in farm dams.

### SECRET #10

Most structure doesn’t hold bass so target only the bendy bits. This principle is useful because it will help prevent you wasting time fishing all the structure in front of you. Look for irregularities, nooks and crannies, bits of shadow or two types of structure next to each other. If you have a 60ft stretch of reeds that’s uniform then fish the two ends of the bed and anything else that breaks up the monotony.

You should always present your fly to something specific — a branch, twig or indentation. Don’t cast unless you have a target and don’t mess about robot casting to nothing in particular. With a bit of experience you will soon start identifying the right sort of features.

All this presupposes that you keep the deeper water/elastic principle in mind. If you present your fly correctly and there is a fish present which is disposed to eat he will do so. If it hasn’t happened you most likely haven’t

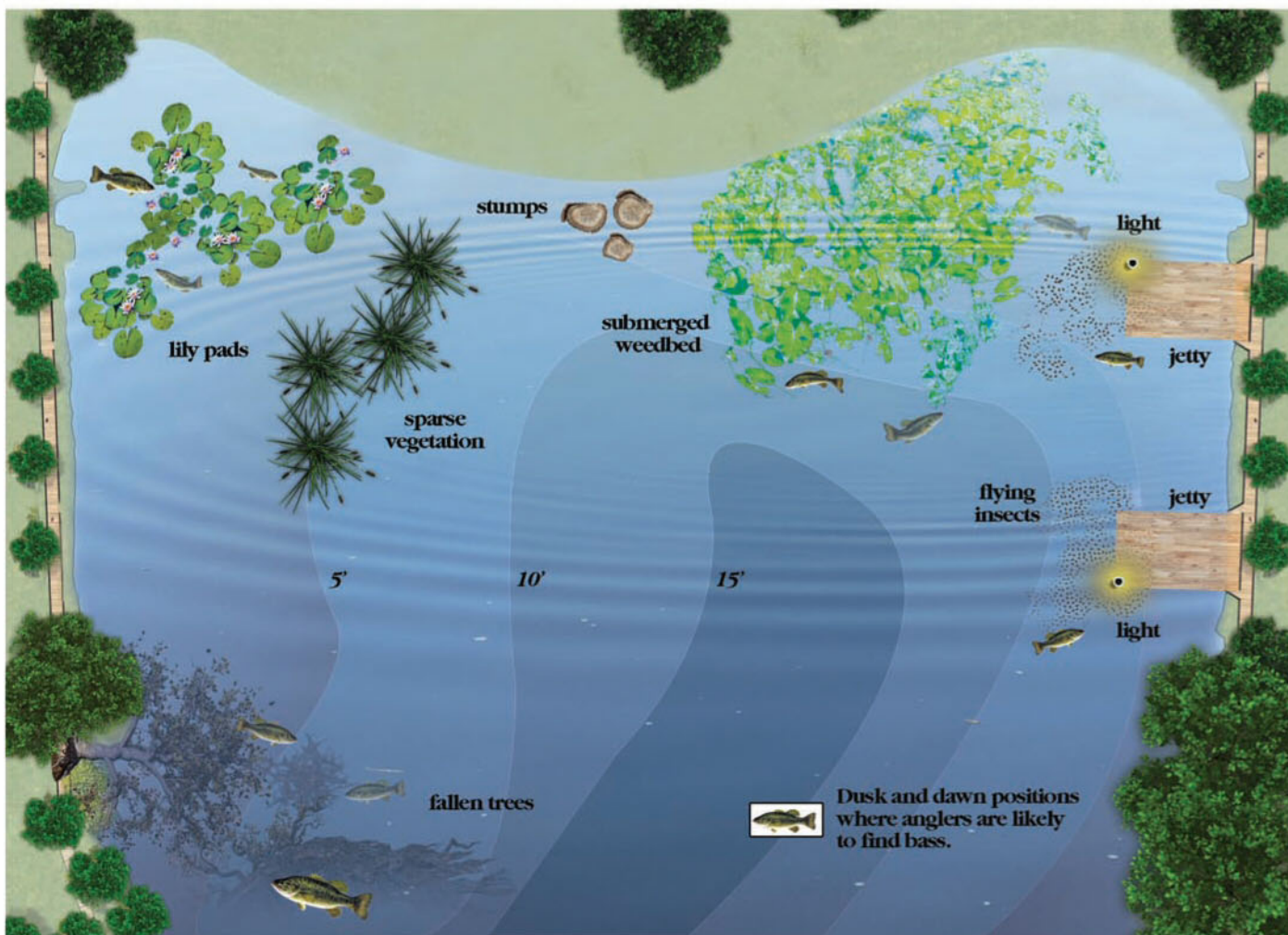
found the fish or (less likely) something significant is wrong with your fly or presentation. Generally it’s better to assume that a quiet patch means you haven’t found the fish yet — getting your fly and presentation right is usually the easy part.

It’s also very important to understand that shadows function as structure. For example, on a summer morning as the sun rises higher you will do well to fish the shady bank and prioritise areas where shadow corresponds with shallow cover near deep water. Bass will hang around in these areas long after they have quit the shallow structure that’s been in full sun since dawn.

### SECRET #11

Stay close to the structure. You cannot present your fly too close to the structure, at least from a bass’s point of view. You should start to feel anxious if your fly is more than 3ft away from structure or the bottom — closer is better. Imagine that all the water is gone and you are just left with the structure and the bottom — your fly needs to be as close as possible to that stuff.

When you’re using a popper or bass bug, it needs to land against the structure and be recast when it’s more than 4ft away from your original target. Sure, fish sometimes strike after a long







follow, but it's not the norm. This is a real advantage that fly tackle has — with a floating line you can pick up and hit a different target quicker than any “chunk and winder”. This principle also impacts fly design — you don't want to be casting short because you don't want to snag your fly. Most of your flies will need some sort of weedless feature.

#### SECRET #12

Fly+line+leader = Golf club. Think about the combination of your fly+line+leader as a tool for a particular job. Just as a golfer carries a bag full of club options, the well-equipped bass fly-rodder should carry an assortment of flies, lines and potentially multiple fly-rods which are matched to the water he's going to fish.

Conventional bass fishermen carry 3-12 outfits with them, each to do a particular job. They will often use two or three rods to fish one piece of structure properly — the flyfisher should do the same, within reason.

Fortunately fly-rods can all handle a wide range of fly sizes and by using a variety of lines and leaders the fly-rodder has good versatility. I'll spend more time discussing tackle later, but what's important here is to have the correct mindset and to set up your rods in a systematic fashion, not just tie on your favourite fly.

#### SECRET #13

There are no magical flies, just effective or ineffective presentations. Flyfishers sometimes attribute semi-magical properties to certain fly patterns which is fine as long as they know why they worked well before. Flies work within a set of many other variables, so that particular #6 popper that killed the fish on a perfect late summer evening may not be the best choice over a breezy, early spring flat. The fly is just part of a total presentation system and with bass it's far better to have the wrong fly in the right place than the right fly in wrong place.

#### SECRET #14

Bass fishing is really a game of percentages — the more effective presentations you make to active fish the more and bigger fish you will catch. It is better to pass up neutral bass and keep moving until you find active fish — bass pros call this “Power Fishing” and neutral or inactive fish are usually ignored if there are active fish around.

Power fishing also assumes high speed presentations are the norm rather than a slower, more subtle approach. Given the limitations on mobility imposed by a small craft there is a balance to be achieved here as you cannot zoom all over a large dam chasing active fish, but it is really important to keep the principal in mind.

Imagine if you miss a peak feeding period because you're slowly working a low-potential piece of structure whilst things are going gangbusters 50 metres down the bank. I find that low-grade FOMO (fear-of-missing-out for older readers) is quite useful in keeping me focussed and fishing at a good pace.

#### SECRET #15

Small bass and big bass don't usually mix. If you are catching lots of small bass (say 25cm or less) then you are unlikely to catch bigger fish in the same spot at the same time. Small bass will keep their heads down if adults are around because they are on the menu! If you enjoy catching small bass then hang around a bit, but otherwise move to the next promising spot.

It is only once bass get to about 30cm that they start hanging around with the bigger fish. At this size they are safe from most adults, so you can fish on with confidence if you are catching them. However, if I get a fish of this size during my first few casts into a really prime spot then I generally won't stick around too long. Big bass on the prod always occupy the prime spot.

If there has been a high level of activity and you move into a really good spot and there is no response it is quite possible that there is an exceptional

fish around. They might be too smart to eat your fly, but they've likely pushed out the smaller fish. Make a note of that spot and try it again during a prime time.

#### SECRET #16

Temperature — follow the Goldilocks principle — not too hot, not too cold, just right. Bass are just like Goldilocks with scales — they are looking for temperatures that are “just right”. To help us identify prime times we can divide the bass season as follows:

Too cold — late winter to early spring. Essentially the top few feet of water are colder than that which provides optimum bass comfort. This means the fish will be actively looking for warmer water which, in the early part of the season, will most consistently be found in the afternoon around shallow banks that get lots of sun. Therefore, in the early part of the season try to fish after lunch into the mid-afternoon.

Google Maps/Earth is really useful to help identify which areas to target based on their aspect. Work out which banks get the most direct sun in early spring and start your fishing there. As the water warms, gradually the feeding window may continue to dusk.

The pre-spawn and spawn are important considerations at this time of year and may affect fishing positively or negatively. Pre-spawn fish are usually aggressive, in excellent condition and can be found near to spawning areas in slightly deeper water. This is also the best time of the year for a chance at a trophy bass. Once the spawn starts you can target bass on their nests but I feel it's a slightly grubby business and I don't bother.

Just right — late spring, early summer. At this time of the year water temps are warm enough so that the bass are comfortable right through the day, meaning that dawn and dusk prime periods are both possible. In my neck of the woods this usually happens in October. I suppose you could say that factors other than water temps have a greater impact on bass behaviour at this time of year.

Too hot — mid- to late summer. The dog days of summer are my least favourite, partly because other water users (water skiers, jetskiers, sailors and campers) reach peak idiocy and bobbing around amid boat wakes, screaming kids and a blistering sun is just not for me. Peak periods will usually be very early, from dawn until the sun hits the water or you run out of shady water to fish — about the time the first beers are opened and the kids start yelling. Dusk prime times are often disappointing, but if you stick around until the early evening you can enjoy some



excellent topwater fishing, especially if the water is clear.

A solid cold front with rain and wind can transform things and produce really good fishing, so bear this in mind as an option. The day the front arrives and the day after are usually the best.

At this time of year the shallows are very warm, so you ought to pay particular attention to fishing structure near deeper, cooler water.

Just right — early autumn. When autumn arrives I breathe a sigh of relief as temps drop and sanity returns. Again water temps are conducive to all day feeding and dawn and dusk prime times are both on the cards. Fish are feeding harder as winter approaches and without the spawn to distract the bass it's fair to say it's my favourite bassing season.

Too cold — late autumn to early winter. As the water plants start to die back the prime time window narrows and tends to occur in the mid- to late afternoon in shallower areas that get lots of sun. Feeding at this time can be brisk and again chances for a bigger fish are good, especially if you use bigger flies than usual. I've found that a winter bite can extend virtually to nightfall, so don't scuttle home too early.

#### SECRET #17

Wind is ... complicated. High winds are not the fly-rod's friend, so there will be times when you either stay home or break out the conventional gear. That said, wind can have a significant impact on the location and behaviour of bass and while this could end up being a complex discussion, it is probably wiser to remember some basic guidelines and consider these in conjunction with the other variables on the day.

A good starting point is to think about what impact current and recent winds have had on water temperatures in various parts of the lake you are fishing. Combined with the "Goldilocks principle" this can give you some indication of where to start fishing.

The rule of thumb is to fish the windward bank, but a strong, cold wind with overcast skies during the early part of the season when the water is too cold will mean that water temps here may be lower than elsewhere in the lake and it may not be the best place to fish.

I have also found that hot, strong winds in late summer can create conditions on the windward bank which are not ideal, with very high water temps and a high concentration of algae. On one occasion I moved upwind to a point where cooler water from the main body of the lake was being pushed past a point by the wind and found water temps a full 5°C cooler. I also found fish there, although the two areas were only 200m apart.



Garnet Prince with a bass caught around structure.


If you experience a warm breeze after lunch during spring or autumn that's an ideal time to fish the windward bank. A day or so after a mid-summer cold front, when there's rain or overcast weather, cool winds and higher oxygen content (due to waves) there will often be excellent feeding conditions on a windward bank.

Also look out for colour lines where bottom sediment has been kicked up by winds hitting the shore — these "edges" can provide cover and excellent feeding opportunities for bass.

Other flyfishers' experiences may vary, but I've found that the 'Berg winds in KZN (usually a late winter or early spring phenomenon) usually result in poor fishing despite their warming effects.

#### SECRET #18

Carry a water thermometer. These are

cheap and can be attached to a bit of string and left in the water. I check mine religiously and you too will be amazed at the variations of water temps in small areas as well as the difference even one degree can have on the fishing. It isn't a tool I would use to predict where to fish, but it does provide useful data which can help fill in some of the blanks. It will also give a general indication about likely fish activity levels. If the temperature is in the low teens or the high 20s I would be inclined to fish a bit slower as the fish are likely to be somewhat lethargic. Also remember the limitations of the thermometer — if your fly is 6ft down, the water is unlikely to be the same temperature as where you are measuring it. 

• In the next issue Rolfe will discuss tips, tackle and tactics to improve your presentation.





A red and black brush fly was the downfall of this beautiful blacktip kingfish.

## Catching kingies from the beach

EVERY angler dreams of tussling with that aggressive and dirty fighter, the *Caranx ignobilis* — the giant kingfish — and I'm no different. However, although the kingfish is top of the list, there are many other kingfish species that are almost as exciting to catch. My quest for that special prized kingfish began afresh one morning in May when I knew the big boys were coming down for the biggest event of the year — the sardine run!

I headed down to my favourite beach at Umdloti South around 7.30am. The fishing conditions were good — it was a few days after full moon and a slight southwesterly wind was blowing with a pushing tide. I was using my new Xplorer 9-wt Classic 2 fitted with an Xplorer Orion 9-wt, Snowbee Intermediate line and a 40 lb flouro leader. The heavy leader sinks quickly, ensuring my fly gets into the strike zone fast.

After tying on a brown brush fly I tried my first spot where two reefs separate and there's a nice deep channel — perfect for kingfish. I had no luck there, so I moved on, casting as I walked the next stretch of beach.

My second spot featured a good drop off where there's a fairly deep gully and I knew baitfish would be hanging around. Over the previous weeks I had also seen kingfish come in and

smash the baitfish trapped in the gully.

I stripped off line to get a good cast into the all-important strike zone, then allowed the fly to sink before starting my retrieve with a medium-fast to fast action. If there was a kingfish in the area I was hoping it would see the fly imitating a small fleeing baitfish and would smash it, but again all was quiet.

On my walk to the next spot, I exchanged the brown brush fly for a red and black brush fly fitted with a 4/0 Mustad hook. I was hoping that would be the fly to break the drought. When I reached Reef Bay I started stripping off line, determined I would have success. In this bay there's a lot of scattered rock structure and kingfish hang around the area hoping to ambush unsuspecting baitfish.

On my sixth or seventh cast I let the leader sink slowly before starting to retrieve my line. On my second pull the line went tight and the water boiled right in front of me in the shore break. I was on! Judging by the continuous head shakes I was pretty sure I'd hooked a decent kingie. He was stripping off my line very quickly and before I knew it I was into my backing.

Kingies are dirty fighters so I had to turn this fish around and keep him off the reef, otherwise he would definitely cut me off. Luckily the tide was still coming in and the water was fairly shal-

low, so I kept the rod high and the line tight and gradually began to get the better of him

As I started retrieving some line I could see the silver shape of the fish in front of me. Despite him making the odd run, trying to get into deeper water where he could cut me off, he was coming closer and I started to use the shore break to bring him in and tire him out.

At last I could see the size and species of kingfish — it was a whopper of a blacktip kingfish — at least 6- or 7kg! Finally a nice sized wave helped bring him closer to the beach. I was thrilled — my biggest kingfish on fly!

I quickly measured the fish, and with a length of 81cm I reckoned he was about 7.8kg. I quickly forgot about my tiredness and looked around for someone to take a picture of me holding this amazing specimen, all the while aware that he was also tired and needed to get back in the water as soon as possible. Fortunately an elderly gentleman walking his dogs agreed to take the picture before I safely returned the kingie to the ocean.

With the right conditions and a few days after a full moon, you are bound to hook into something interesting — and hopefully big — on this stretch of beach. Many other species of kingfish can also be caught at Umdloti South; I've caught GTs and brassy kingfish and then of course there are kob, giant blue shad and grunter as well as many others if you're prepared to put in the time and effort.

Always remember that any fish which has endured a long fight needs to be revived by having water flow over its gills before it's released back into the water. Ensure you take that photo of your special fish quickly and then let your fish roam free again.



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# PAYING THE BILLS

Learning respect for a worthy adversary

**A** NGLING was never really considered a glamorous sport, probably due to the amount of blood and guts initially involved, accompanied by the pungent aroma that accompanied every outing — and which accompanied you home. It's hardly the image that embodies the sporting hero.

All that changed when the majestic billfish captured the imagination of every reader after being immortalised in the writings of Sir Ernest Hemingway. Here was a fish that roamed the open sea and had all the attributes of a formidable adversary. Lightning quick speed, astonishing agility and aggression that any worthy rival demands, this was a beast to conquer indeed. With billfishing evolving to being mainly a

tag and release activity, the challenger was the proverbial knight in shining armour.

No wonder then that every year besotted anglers migrate to the east coast of Africa to take on this ultimate challenge. Those who really relish the fight in the fish do so on fly!

There are few target species which will drag you through the full spectrum of emotions as you attempt to catch them, but sailfish certainly do. On any single specimen the hook up is one of surprise for most of us, followed by the elation that something is on the end of your line as you come to grips with the tussle that ensues.

Of course the bigger the beast with which you've picked a fight, the more trepidation sets in as you consider all

that could actually go wrong.

If you throw in the fact that you're taking on the fastest fins in the ocean, and a fish which is more than a little hacked off that it's easy meal turned out to be your glistening hook, then your angst turns to justifiable fear of the possible outcome.

After the initial run and acrobatic jump and what can seem like an eternity, confidence is eventually restored as you convince yourself you have it all under control. But complacency has no home in the world of fishing and the distance between a photo of another conquest and the fish you now see peeling off line seems like a bridge too far. Doubt and anguish are ugly bed fellows.

At some stage frustration eventually

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Opposite: Billfishing is a team sport and the team loves it when the plan comes together!  
 Left: A sailfish perfectly hooked in the scissors of its jaws.  
 Below: A striped marlin caught on fly ready for release.



overwhelms you. After all, you have earned this fish and what right does this overrated sardine snatcher have to challenge your authority? The realisation that you are a little out of your literal depth sets in and that's when respect is silently but irrevocably bestowed.

This is the experience of anyone who has ever tried to catch a billfish on fly for the first time. If the angler happens to tag and release the fish then, as with any self-respecting manic-depressive, the euphoria returns.

### BACK TO BASICS

So, before you pack your bags and sail off into the sunset looking for a bill to which you can pay your respects, here are a few basics which will hopefully help you experience that thrill.

Carefully picking your destination and time of year is a given on any fishing trip, but in this pursuit your crew is paramount. You want to choose a team that have seen more sailfish landed than most anglers have tied knots. A well trained unit will ensure that you not only find the fish, but also successfully tease it to the transom.

Make sure your tackle is ready for the bill to breach and, with a teaser in the right waters, that might well be



sooner than you expect. I always ask the skipper to check my rig and in particular my drag and then have the line spooled out on the deck, on a towel, with only enough line to make the cast. It can happen in the blink of an eye, so be completely ready to pick up and throw.


Run a few drills. Don't be embarrassed to practice and get used to the activity of outriggers being brought in and deckhands hauling out the teasers. Get comfortable with your 14-wt broomstick with what feels like half a chicken on the end of it, because in the moment of truth you need to put the fly in the right place.

On your first encounter you will panic, adrenaline guarantees this, but remember that you have time; the crew will bring the fish to you. And here's the critical pearl — *put your fly behind the charging fish*. If it lands in front, pick it up immediately and throw it again. That's easier said than done, but it's essential if you want to land the fish. Pressure from a sailfish's bill leads many

to believe that they are in, but unless the hook is stuck in the scissors, with the fish going away from you it will end in tears.

Once you put your fly behind the fish do not try to stop it or make the injury-inducing mistake of palming the reel — it will hit you like a freight train! It's instant respect when you see what this fish is capable of. Just hold on and let your reel sing to the 75km/h sprint and they'll give you an acrobatic display that will make your heart soar. With a good skipper and experienced crew on your side the multiple jumps are a good indication that you'll be tagging your billfish in due course.

Not every moment is all out action and you'll certainly whittle away more than your fair share of time watching the teasers, but if you've got a choice between any type of fishing experience and the exhilaration of catching a billfish on fly, then grab the chance.

Remember, your fishing time is as valuable as anything else in short supply, so don't waste it. 

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## SPREADING THE WORD IN FLYFISHING

**S**INCE *Trout & About* became a regular feature in *FLYFISHING* magazine — it first saw the light of day way back in mid-1993 — it has proved immensely popular with both reader (in search of places in which to stay and fish) and owner of such facilities.

Indeed, many flyfishing facilities have been placed on the map, so to speak, by publicising their services in *Trout & About*. As a result, access by the general public to good trout waters has broadened and the sport has attracted many more participants.

Further, increasing demand for more waters has given rise to an ever-growing list of accommodation establishments of all sizes which offer trout fishing to guests. In fact, what we now have is a burgeoning trout fishing/accommodation industry which has still to reach its zenith.



The primary reason for *Trout & About* is to encourage and promote flyfishing in South Africa, at the same time affording valuable exposure to those who market such facilities.

As an added incentive, this feature is in full-colour — but still at 50% of our normal black & white advertising rate. As before, for the sake of uniformity, each *Trout & About* entry occupies half a page.

Consistency will also be carried through to the information contained in each guide, including how to get there, access maps, general information, costs, addresses, telephone numbers, etc.

Advertisers who would like to avail themselves of this opportunity to publicise their flyfishing waters and facilities should contact Joan Wilson on (031) 572-2289. If you're not in print you're not in the public's eye.

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**W**ILD flyfishing in the Karoo? Blistering blue horizons and dry river beds don't exactly conjure up images of record river trout (6.48kg) or technical nymphing in fountain-fed stillwaters.

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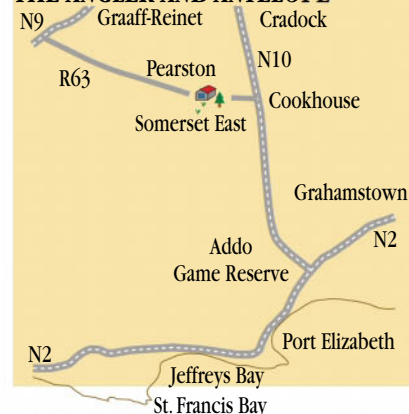
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#### THE ANGLER AND ANTELOPE





## STALK TROUT IN COMFORT

### All you need for wading and float-tubing

**F**OR 12 years the folks at Frontier Fly Fishing looked for a manufacturer for their V-boat premium float-tube, and in 2013 they found what they were looking for. The manufacturer in question produces the world's finest float-tubes and pontoon boats, so Frontier Fly Fishing were assured of offering to the public the best possible V-boat on the market.

With a combined 95 years stillwater fishing experience amongst Tom Lewin, Dean Riphagen and Mike McKeown, all the best features were incorporated into the initial design, and after sending the required specifications to the manufacturer, two sample V-boats were tested in September 2013 at Highland Lodge in the Eastern Cape.

After some minor modifications and tweaks were made to the initial prototypes, a container-load of Horizon Troutstalker boats arrived in May 2014 and are available to South African anglers looking for the best V-boat on the market.

Only the finest materials have been utilised in the construction of the Horizon Troutstalker. The top and side panels are constructed of tough 420 denier nylon fabric, the bottom is constructed of super tough 500 denier 30oz PVC fabric for maximum puncture resistance, and the main bladder is constructed of heavy-duty, heat-seam-sealed urethane.

A foam seat and backrest are standard with each boat, but an air seat and air backrests are available as an upgrade. The Boston valve is located in the right-hand cargo pocket to avoid any possibility of line snags, and there's a large mesh stripping apron for easy drainage. The 30mm raised lip on the stripping apron ensures the wind will not blow your line off the stripping apron. No stabiliser bar is required to hold the stripping apron tight and in place, and a quick-release buckle on the stripping apron allows for easy access.

The Troutstalker also features two convenient side carry handles, two large side cargo pockets and a large back utility pocket behind the backrest, so there's plenty of storage space. The zippered pocket inside each cargo pocket is the ideal place to store valuables, like your car keys.

Two built-in rod holders on the inside of the cargo pockets eliminate the need for add-on rod holders. The Blaze orange panel on the bow of the medium blue/dark blue boat means it's always easily visible.

The Troutstalker has a 130kg (290 lb) carrying capacity, and a repair kit is also included. The boat weighs 7.5kg and sells for R3 250.



#### WADING IN STYLE

**F**RONTIER Distribution also recently launched their series of breathable waders, the Horizon Guide breathable stockingfoot waders. These waders have all the features of the world's best waders at a fraction of the price.

The waders are constructed of three-layer fabric on the upper surface and four-layer fabric on the waders' lower surface for added puncture resistance. The articulated seam is cut away from the inside knee area to reduce wear and abrasion, and comfortable neoprene suspenders ensure all-day comfort.

The waders also feature a zippered external chest pocket, a reach-through, fleece-lined handwarmer pocket, a built-in webbing belt with flush-fitting belt loops, and integrated gravel guards to prevent annoying gravel and sand from entering your wading boots. They sell for R2 750.

For further information on the Horizon Troutstalker V-boat and other products, contact Frontier Fly Fishing on (011) 463-9048 or visit their website <[www.frontierflyfishing.co.za](http://www.frontierflyfishing.co.za)>.



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**WE CONNECT YOU**  
FROM SOURCE TO SEA - YOUR JOURNEY STARTS HERE

Find your perfect fishing package  
online with **WILDFLYTRAVEL.COM**

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## HOW WE CONNECT YOU

- Choose from 15 countries
- Each offering hand picked and accredited fishing lodges & resorts
- Take a tour of the destination through the video and photographic galleries on our website
- Choose your package
- Then contact us for up to date information and seamless travel organisation

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OR TAKE A SCROLL THROUGH  
THE PHOTO GALLERY

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# YELLOWFISH HOTSPOT



**KALAHARI  
OUTVENTURES**

- NORTHERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA -

Covering a 35km stretch of the Wildest piece of the Orange River, Your fishing trip begins just downstream from the Augrabies Falls National Park on the Southern Cross Game Reserve. Spend your first night in our Luxury Farmhouse, with dinner around the campfire. The next day you are introduced to the mighty Orange River and a Yellowfish paradise.

Groups are kept to a minimum size (8) to keep it personal. You have the opportunity to have 1 on 1 instruction daily from our expert fishing guides. We guarantee you will get hooked.

If fishing is not your thing, why not try our 4 Day Canoe Safari, ideal for family holidays. Other activities offered include: Augrabies Rafting, Birdwatching, Teambuilding, Corporate Events, Kalahari Safaris, Game drives, Lodge and Hot Springs

## 4 Day Xtream Wilderness Flyfishing Safari

from **ZAR 5,695.00** per person - max 8 guests

PACKAGES SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY & CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS. T&C'S APPLY



[www.kalahari-adventures.co.za](http://www.kalahari-adventures.co.za)

UPGRADE YOUR KALAHARI EXPERIENCE WITH

## TUTWA DESERT LODGE

An overnight stay with 2 game activities, meals and local drinks

from **ZAR 3,990.00** per person



# MSINSI WATERS



**MSINSI  
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Among the many recreational activities you can enjoy at **Msinsi Resorts and Game Reserve** are: game drives, birding, trail walks, watersports, canoeing and boating, camping, picnicking and rock climbing at Shongweni. Stay in comfortable accommodation.

MSINSI FISHING WATERS INCLUDE:

- ALBERT FALLS    - INANDA
- NAGLE            - BON ACCORDE

For packages and more information please contact us on

**031 765 7724**

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[msinsi.co.za](http://msinsi.co.za)





# TIGER SPECIALS

## NAMIBIA



**ICHINGO CHOBE RIVER LODGE**  
4 Night package ex Kasane from  
**ZAR 8,800.00** per person sharing



**CHOBE PRINCESS SAFARI BOATS**  
4 Night package ex Kasane from  
**ZAR 12,000.00** per person sharing

## BOTSWANA



**GUMA LAGOON CAMP**  
4 Night package ex Maun from  
**BWP 16,050.00** per person sharing



**KILOMBERO NORTH SAFARIS**  
7 Night package ex dar es Salaam from  
**USD 7,995.00** per person sharing

## SOUTH AFRICA



**JOZINI TIGER LODGE**  
3 Night Tiger Fishing package from  
**ZAR 4,275.00** per person sharing



**SHAYAMOYA**  
2 Night Joint Couple Retreat from  
**ZAR 1,095.00** per person sharing

## UPPER ZAMBEZI



**MATOYA FISHING LODGE**  
5 Night package ex Lanseria from  
**ZAR 35,990.00** per person sharing



For more information and videos on our exceptional fishing packages log onto  
**WILDFLYTRAVEL.COM**



## LOWER ZAMBEZI



**BAINES RIVER CAMP**  
4 Night package ex Lusaka from  
**USD 1,475.00** per person sharing



**CHONGWE RIVER CAMP**  
4 Night package ex Lusaka from  
**USD 1,550.00** per person sharing



**CHIAWA CAMP**  
4 Night package ex Lusaka from  
**USD 3,310.00** per person sharing



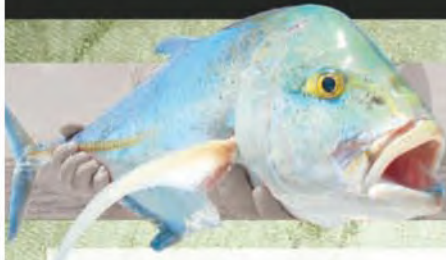
**KASAKA RIVER LODGE**  
4 Night package ex Lusaka from  
**USD 1,380.00** per person sharing



**TSIKA ISLAND**  
4 Night package ex Lusaka from  
**USD 1,450.00** per person sharing

PACKAGES SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY & CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS. T&C'S APPLY





# BLUE WATER SPECIALS

## MOZAMBIQUE



**ANANTARA BAZARUTO ISLAND LODGE AND SPA**  
5 Night package ex Vilanculos  
from **USD 1,464.00** per person sharing



**MACHANGULO BEACH LODGE**  
5 Night package ex Maputo  
from **ZAR 13,520.00** per person sharing

## SEYCHELLES



**ALPHONSE ISLAND**  
7 Night package ex Mahé  
from **USD 8,950.00** per person



**SEYCHELLES LIVE-ABOARD**  
7 Night package ex Mahé  
from **ZAR 37,570.00** per person  
Based on **6 guests**

PACKAGES SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY & CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS. T&C'S APPLY



# TROUT & YELLOWFISH SPECIALS

## LESOTHO



**SEMONKONG LODGE**  
3 Night package from  
**LSL 1,095.00** per person sharing

Abselling the "Guinness World Record" Maletsunyane Waterfall costs **LSL 895.00** per person

## SOUTH AFRICA



**CATHEDRAL PEAK HOTEL**  
3 Night package from  
**ZAR 4,015.00** per person sharing

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BE YOU**



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Tel: (033) 266 7153  
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**BANCHORY**

Situated on the top of a hill with magnificent views of the Southern Drakensberg mountains, Banchory farm has two large dams for flyfishing with recorded catches of 11 lb 9 oz in one dam, and 10 lb 2 oz in the other. There are also smaller dams for bass fishing, as well as many dams and streams in the Swartberg area where alternative fishing may be organised.

Contact Margie or Martin  
Tel (039) 747-4623 • cell 083 440-7210  
E-mail: [margie@banchory.co.za](mailto:margie@banchory.co.za)  
Website: [www.banchory.co.za](http://www.banchory.co.za)

**FANCY FREE**

In a Scenic Valley just 2.5hrs drive from Johannesburg, just off the N4 near Machadodorp, you will find Fancy Free. An excellent venue for fly-fishing for brown and rainbow trout as well as bass. 5 trout dams and 3 bass dams to choose from. Ideal venue for the avid flyfisherman as well as a great getaway venue for family and friends.

Vaughn Cell: +27 82 901 8961  
Carol Cell: +27 82 573 5245 • Landline: 013 256 9266  
E-mail: [info@fancyfree.co.za](mailto:info@fancyfree.co.za) • [www.fancyfree.co.za](http://www.fancyfree.co.za)

**Lake St. Bernard**

We invite you to visit this small piece of paradise situated in the Southern Drakensberg. Lake St. Bernard is an 88 hectare lake and a private game farm that is home to many species of big game wildlife.

- Ferndale Country House sleeps 10
- Leyden Country House sleeps 12
- Three lake side cottages, sleep 6 each.

For bookings and availability contact  
Pauline: 083 570 8330 • Fax: 086 688 8456  
E-mail: [breakaway@sadomain.net](mailto:breakaway@sadomain.net)  
Website: [www.lakestbernard.co.za](http://www.lakestbernard.co.za)

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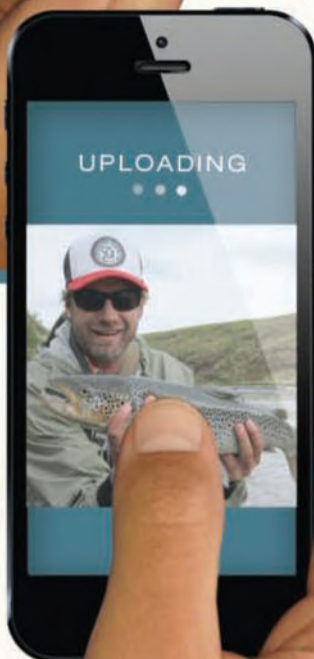


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